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Authentic Space

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Abstract

This inquiry examines the lived experience of a believing Christian seeking authentic space on a secular academic course. It has come about as a result of an experience of both angst and transformation leading to the focus of this inquiry which is looking to answer the question of: “How does a committed Christian with a belief in foundational truth, authentically relate and integrate their faith and new found knowledge in counselling practice and research on a secular training course?” Research literature acknowledges a growing interest and demand for further debate and research in the domain of integration of faith and psychotherapy and practice, where evidence points to there being a gap in training. Integration is acknowledged as problematic but specific challenges are noted as not being so well researched. The study is written in the form of a paradigmatic case study where the researcher is also the researched. It embraces a pluralistic methodology incorporating aspects of personal narrative, interpretive phenomenological analysis and tacit understanding as advocated by Polanyi. This inquiry explores both the problem encountered and the solution found. The problem was epistemological, that of a personal belief in foundational truth, the central tenet of the Christian faith and the challenge of co-habiting a secular relativist space. The purpose and goal of this inquiry is to both show and tell the process of integration, which allowed authentic space to emerge both personally and theoretically. An exploration of a personal epiphany of ‘heart and mind’ integration is pivotal in this inquiry. The key finding which made integration possible was the discovery of and engagement with both Michael Polanyi and C.S. Lewis and their progressive theories of knowledge: theories which embrace both fundamental Christian belief and the fundamental values and theories taught in the dialogue of both person-centred and psychodynamic approaches. This study and reflexive analysis has created the basis of a body of work, which can be used as a means of support for Christian trainees who encounter similar challenges in academic spaces and in practice in this postmodern age. It can also be of benefit to trainers and course designers and counselling practitioners as they engage and dialogue with this re emerging phenomena. Finally this inquiry can be the catalyst for further research and development in order to begin to bridge the epistemological gap encountered in training.

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Declaration

I, Joan Jamison, declare that this thesis:

(a) has been composed by myself;

(b) contains my own original work; and

(c) has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Signature

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review

1.1. Introduction

I have a passion for life! My lived experience on the professional doctorate course in psychotherapy has enhanced my passion for life and all that it has to offer me - in the beauty of the natural world and more specifically in the beauty of personhood and significantly the 'wonder' of being in relationship with one another. There is of course another reality that life also brings with it suffering and pain. Those of us in the counselling world are brought face to face with the horrors of pain and suffering with relentless regularity and no doubt have experienced it to a lesser or greater extent ourselves. I now experience both joy and pain at a much deeper level. I often just find myself saying "Life!"

Life for me with all its complexity and nuance has come to resemble a puzzle, there are many parts, which make up the whole and it is only as the parts begin to fit together does the puzzle begin to make sense and reveal a bigger picture or meaning. My experience of being on and my engagement with the professional doctorate over the past six years has been instrumental in adding pieces to that intricate puzzle, helping me to clarify and make sense of my own personal experience whilst I believe at the same time pointing to a bigger, universal picture.

At the core of the counselling programme at the University of Edinburgh is a commitment to dialogue between the person-centred and psychodynamic perspectives, both encompassing a set of understandings about what it means to be human. Open exploration and dialogue permeates every aspect of the programme and students at all levels are encouraged to experience, experiment with and integrate insights, values and practices drawn from each. The academic rigour of the dialogue requires students to challenge and accept challenge to assumptions about self and other, including stereotypes, generalisations and prejudices in order to seek "a truer self concept". I joined the certificate course in September 2009. This course provides grounding in counselling skills, attitudes and values, whilst encouraging the development of self-awareness. I carried on into the diploma in September 2010 – 2012, both an academic and professional training programme, encompassing theory, practice, professional issues and self/other awareness, personal development along with philosophical, historical and contemporary socio-cultural themes. This was followed by the masters' course in 2013, which specialises in qualitative and critical approaches to research. The core research objectives are to conduct research investigations and produce research knowledge, which are consistent with the values and practices of the therapeutic practices taught, trained and embodied as practitioners. The theme of narrative is one to which the course returns

repeatedly. Towards the end of 2013 I transferred to the professional doctorate, designed and organised to support progressive development of advanced practice based, reflective, analytical and research skills - seeking to train practitioners who are competent on different levels furnishing them with a wide range of transferable skills. Due to ongoing challenging home circumstances I took an interruption of studies towards end of 2014 for 10 months. Once I resumed in September 2015, I requested and was given one years extension, with completion due May 2017. So here I am. Let me introduce myself.

I am a believing Christian – a follower of Christ. My Christian faith has informed my thinking and way of being up to this point. Christianity stands or falls on the validity of its ‘truth’ claims. Jesus Christ claimed to be “The way, The truth and The life” (John 14:6). I have chosen to believe His claims and that personal choice and commitment has impacted every part of me. These truths are foundational to life and the person I believe myself to be. Faith and belief co-exist together. Whilst belief in God is no longer axiomatic in society as a whole, nor accorded credibility in many quarters, for me as a believing Christian it is a given. My stance is not a popular one and my biggest challenge to my faith to date (I have just turned 58) has been in entering the secular world of academia in this current postmodern age. This challenge has drawn me to my topic of inquiry – the integration of Christian faith and psychotherapy. My interest comes from a very personal experience of both angst and transformation encountered during training. This sense of challenge and angst would appear to be a common theme among psychotherapists with a strong sense of religious conviction who have trained in secular academia, as will become evident in my literature review below. Exploration of my deeply held belief system during my training has enabled me to see that my faith is not ‘blind’ but reasonable on the basis of historical fact and personal experience.

Part of the role and purpose of education is to ‘trouble’ our ways of thinking (Tamas 2014) and cause us to question our presuppositions and historical bias. My own way of thinking has rightly been ‘troubled’ but as a result of having immersed myself in this rigorous process I have surfaced with the same foundational stance, but one which has been strengthened and extended as the result of the training and practice. How then can I (alongside my Christian colleagues with similar convictions) find an authentic academic space and be able to engage with the process with integrity and without compromise? My research question then is: “How does a committed Christian with a belief in foundational truth, authentically relate and integrate their faith and new found knowledge in counselling practice and research on a secular training course?” The outcome of the course for me is that I am an integrated practitioner. How did that take place? My story will be an in depth paradigmatic case study of

a reflexive analysis of my experience and process of integration. I moved from a place of discomfort, unease and disjointedness to a place of harmony and integration. I had the sense of 'coming alive' and am left with a renewed sense of hope. In arguing for authentic space, inherent in that process will be an investigation, exploration and personal validation of my Christian faith. My research goal and aim is in finding the basis of a conceptual model that allows for integration of Christian faith (in the context of a belief in foundational truth) and psychotherapy on the basis of my own personal experience of connection and integration. This model could be used as a platform or guide in helping other believing Christians who find themselves facing similar challenges, whilst creating a basis for further development in this area as a whole. I believe this will come together organically in and through the writing of my story.

1.2. Literature Review on integration of Faith, Religion, Spirituality and Psychotherapy

The field of my inquiry is that of integration of faith and psychotherapy. I believe faith to incorporate elements of both religion and spirituality. As I began my literature search I wanted to ascertain three things – one was to find out if integration was deemed a worthwhile endeavour; if so why and what were the associated challenges. I based my search on relevance to my project and to personal identification and resonance in the literature reviewed. I began my search by looking for references to faith, religion and psychotherapy. There was an abundance of literature dealing with religion and spirituality in connection with psychotherapy noting both the need for further research in this emerging phenomenon and detailing some of the challenges involved. My research will add further evidence to this being an area, which is indeed problematic and will in some measure plug the gap articulated in the literature. It has been noted in the literature that there is very little research into specific challenges related to integration. My inquiry will explore a particular problem (that of how to negotiate and integrate a belief in foundational truth on a secular course), my engagement with that problem and my solution to it. My search engines were Google Scholar, PsychInfo, Wiley online, Taylor & Francis online. A significant part of my search came about through engagement with bibliographies.

Religion and spirituality are areas that are increasingly on the radar of qualitative research in the field of counselling and psychotherapy. This is not by any means a new relationship. James (1902) considered religion as an essential part of psychotherapy, and Jung (1938) went so far as to believe that no one could find healing or meaning outside religious belief. Benner (1998) and West (2000) both note a renewed emphasis and interest in this area in mental

health studies. West quotes Richards & Bergin (1997) who believe the time is now ripe for integration of a spiritual strategy into mainstream psychotherapy and practice. Integration of these two fields has become a growing and significant area of interest as Benner (1998), Richards & Bergin (1997), Worthington et al (1996) have indicated. This attention has come about as a result of perceived positive benefits in the relationship between religion and health (Koenig & Cohen 2002, Hill & Pargament 2003, Viftrup, Hvidt & Buus 2013) as well as the recognition that spirituality is integral to the make up of humanity and therefore should not be ignored (Thorne 2001, Sperry 2001, West 2010). There is also increasing recognition that these essential aspects of self are often intertwined with presenting problems (Shafranske & Malony 1990, West 2000, Sperry & Shafranske 2005).

I have divided the remainder of the literature review into 4 sections under the headings of 'More 'Space'', 'Problematic', 'Personal dilemma' and concluding with 'Guides'. The sense of 'more space' needing to be given to issues of faith in training appears to be a common theme. The reviews point to a perceived gap in training, where the lack of engagement can lead to an inability for trainees and trained therapists to work competently or indeed congruently in this domain. The research literature notes integration of faith and psychotherapy as problematic citing a number of reasons why this may be the case: the ambiguity and diversity of definitions and meaning of the related terms, the epistemological shift resulting from the onset of postmodernism leading to a polarisation of the constructs of religion and spirituality, the questioning of objective truth and the lack of a conceptual framework to work within. I was able to identify with all of the above but the most significant problem for me was epistemological, centered around my belief in God and foundational truth – my own personal and specific dilemma. Under 'Guides' I introduce you to authors and thinkers who have been part and parcel of my reflective process throughout my inquiry. It has been very much a collaborative project. My review, focusing on the need for 'more space' follows.

1.3. More 'Space'

Martinez & Baker (2000) argue a case in their study for an "increased research focus" within counsellor training, giving greater consideration to religious orientation. Their study, which explored the interplay of religiosity and professional practice, points to a perceived gap in training. The study revealed a lack of room for serious discussion over spiritual matters in training, illustrating a need for further research in this area. They note the value of their limited results may be in stimulating further questions such as "Do religious trainees endure in silence? Should they demand 'space' in the curriculum?" They also raised questions of

competency in the counsellor's ability to deal competently with clients in this diverse area. Barnett & Johnson (2011) note in their study that lack of training in this area can cause anxiety-provoking experiences as counsellors determine how to act ethically and competently when addressing religious beliefs and practices with their clients.

Scott (2011) in her doctoral dissertation writes about her own personal experience of integrating Christian faith with clinical practice. The conclusion she makes from her body of research attests to some of the same themes. She writes that counsellors with Christian faith believe their spirituality to be an integral part of their work. She notes that most of the counsellors who took part in her survey desired more "safe space" to explore this issue further. She writes "those that straddle the counselling/Christian faith divide often feel like edge-dwellers" (p.16).

Crossley & Salter (2005) in their study of clinical psychologists' experience of addressing spiritual beliefs in therapy note that spirituality has been described, "as perhaps the most unexamined issue of diversity within the field of mental health" (p.297). The participants in their research recorded feelings of confusion and discomfort associated with discussion of the topic alongside a feeling of not being able to grasp the fundamental nature of spirituality. The authors write in the discussion section "it is a diverse and difficult topic that is not rigorously engaged with within training and professional debate" (p.307). The goal of remaining in harmony with beliefs is a complex one but the need to develop a more coherent and accessible concept is encouraged.

Potts (2008) in her study on 'Therapists' religion' also notes a pervasive lack of relevant professional training. She argues that there is a growing appreciation of the influential role religious beliefs and practices hold in people's lives. She sees it as an important aspect of client's diversity, arguing the need for assimilation. She concedes that therapists are largely left to develop their own ways of integrating these domains, a process which for many is marked by "experiences of ambiguity and contradiction, value congruence and value-clash situations" (p.17). She notes the need for and challenge of addressing religious issues during training and professional practice.

The above findings echo that of widespread research findings in the US noting the prominence and importance of these issues for Christian practitioners in particular (Shafranske & Malony 1990). Psychotherapists own belief systems play a big part in applied practice. A survey carried out by Bilgrave & Deluty (2002) found that 72% of 237

psychotherapists and clinicians noted that their religious convictions had an influence on their practice. In a survey carried out among German psychotherapists similar findings were revealed (Hofmann & Walach 2011) - results showed that almost two thirds of those who took part in the survey believed in some sort of higher or transcendent reality and noted the importance of this in their lives and that of their clients. They wanted these topics better represented in graduate and postgraduate curricula. Hofmann & Walach were surprised by the results given the secular culture they were part of. This is in keeping with Smith & Orlinsky (2004), who found similar figures, interpreting these as evidence that psychology as a discipline is secular, but psychotherapists as individuals often are not. Hofmann & Walach note a blind spot for designers of postgraduate psychotherapy curricula. They argue it is time to rethink this secular stance if it is to connect authentically and practically with this emerging phenomena and interest.

Hall & Hall (2007) in their overview of work in this area over the preceding 25 years note that the impetus for clinical integration has gained momentum as therapists from a wide range of backgrounds have recognised the importance of taking religious views and belief systems into account in the therapy process, thus integrating all aspects of the individual. Psychotherapy is not a value neutral process and therapist's values do influence both the goals and the process of therapy (Bergin 1991). This view has also been evidenced in the *Thresholds* magazine (BACP's spirituality's quarterly journal) where there is an increasing interest in and awareness of spiritual issues and their relation to counselling and psychotherapy.

My own experience of counselling and psychotherapy training would tie in with many of the issues raised above as in experiencing feelings of confusion, discomfort, ambiguity and contradiction. I believe there is a gap in training and I can identify with Ann Scott and her sense of the Christian/secular divide and her struggle to find authentic or congruent 'space'. My faith was (and still is) an integral part of who I am, where I believe my spirituality to be core to my personal identity. This created a very real sense of tension and unease as I tried to reconcile the differing worldviews. I was brought face to face with a strong personal bias, in particular my belief in foundational truth (embodied in the person of Jesus Christ). Challenging and questioning my prior assumptions, my value system and previous and present religious experience was a very necessary part of my process in training. I was left however, with an even deeper and more profound faith at the end of it. Integration of all three aspects (my Christian beliefs, theory taught and counselling practice) I found very

challenging, particularly as I began to work with clients in my early placements. I had to develop my own way of integrating these domains. I had no basis to work from.

In writing a reflexive examination and analysis of my story of my experience, I hope to make that challenging space visible and available as adding to the dialogue in this emerging field whilst seeking a valid way to integrate these two worlds. My research will seek to clarify, articulate and conceptualise theoretically my experience of integration and in doing so create a platform for both trainees and practitioners with Christian faith to be able to be on their courses and practice with a sense of congruence, integrity and sense of validity – thus creating more space. Moran (2007) in his study of identity of evangelical Christian students writes of the challenges of authentication in this area of personal identity. Students felt a burden of proof to represent the authenticity of the religious identity they claimed to espouse within a secular academic culture of skepticism. Integration is problematic.

1.4. Problematic

The interface of psychotherapy and religious beliefs and spirituality is a problematic one and has been controversial from the very onset of psychotherapy. Freud (1927) was dismissive of religion and viewed religious experience as illusory with the potential of leading to neurosis. This extreme view has developed over the years. More recently there are increasing voices who believe it to be intrinsic to human nature and are seeking ways of integration, demanding renewed thinking and attention (Benner 1998, Gonsiorek et al 2009, Richards & Bergin 1997). Availability of support in this area both from training, the academy and supervision is seen as problematic, a sense also endorsed by professionals in the UK noting ambiguity over definitions, meaning and a lack of research on how counsellors work with faith in practice (West 2000, Wyatt 2002).

Crossley & Salter (2005) also note that part of the problem is related to the ambiguity and diversity of meaning surrounding religion and spirituality. Hill & Pargament (2003) write of the evolution of the term and its meaning. Religion has shifted from a dynamic, subjective felt experience as partly understood by James (1902), to a more objectified and axiomatic state resulting from modernism. Rizzuto (2005) notes the correlation of the separation of spirituality from religion with the arrival of the new paradigm of postmodernism, where diversity, fragmentation and scrutiny of comprehensive systems are valued. Smith (2007) notes that this paradigmatic shift “warrants our attention as we seek to understand, research, and apply the human experience of spirituality and religion to counselling theory and education” (p.6).

Sperry and Shafranske (2005) have identified a series of factors that have emphasized the distance between religion and spirituality: postmodernism's questioning of objective truth and the focus on personal autonomy and individual experience. Religion became synonymous with grand meta-narratives, and the call for the death of meta-narratives by postmodernism left an existential vacuum needing filled. The contemporary construct of spirituality was created to fill the gap. Smith (2007) notes "The profession must then address the problematic issues related to the gap between religion and spirituality that has arisen as a result of passage through the epistemological filters of modernity and postmodernity" (p.13). There are problems inherent in polarising these two constructs. Zinnbauer et al. (1999) conclude that the polarisation results in a loss of focus necessary for research and "leaves us with a static rendering of religion and an ephemeral, coreless version of spirituality." (cited in Smith p.13). Pargament (2002) asserts that the polarised perspective overlooks the potentially helpful and harmful elements of both religion and spirituality.

This differentiation of terms was also evidenced in the 'Theology and Therapy' research project conducted by the University of Edinburgh which set out to understand the ways in which psychotherapy, Christianity and a new language of spirituality intertwined in the period between 1945-2000 in Scotland, exploring a synthesis of Christianity and psychotherapy. Bondi (2013a) developed this further in her paper entitled 'Between Christianity and secularity' where she explores the evolving relationship between Christianity and psychotherapy in urban Scotland post 1920's. Bondi argues that counselling and psychotherapy in Scotland have never been wholly secular when secularity is equated with an absence of religiosity and makes a case for the concept of "post secular rapprochement". Fergusson (2012) adds to this conversation when writing about the interaction of philosophy, theology and psychotherapy among leading Scottish thinkers in the mid 1920's and argues the importance of situating psychotherapy within a broader philosophical and ethical context. He notes that psychotherapy:

seems to raise questions about the moral and spiritual framework within which we understand our personhood and its goals (p.288).

There appears to be a renewed demand for a more holistic focus.

Nelson (2009) believes that dialogue in the fields of psychology and religion is problematic on two levels. It requires knowledge of both and it requires conceptual tools to organise the material and to understand the basic problems in connecting the two. Plante (2007) suggests

this uneasy relationship may be understood as a function of divergent epistemologies, which underlie each discipline. Golsworthy & Coyle (2001) also note from their study the lack of a conceptual framework within which to address religious or spiritual issues in therapy, one that allows for authentic connection. They note that as a result of this perceived neglect of religious and spiritual issues, counsellors may use frameworks that are incongruous to that person's belief system rather than allowing for intrinsic bias. Browning (2011) in his effort to demonstrate how the dialogue between science and religion can be productive is urging a consideration of the hermeneutical dimension of psychotherapy activity, advocating an epistemology that prioritises understanding over explanation and one, which gives serious consideration to the effective history of the past, where it has been a positive rather than negative influence in making sense of experience. Moving onto my own 'personal dilemma'.

1.5. Personal Dilemma

The perceived polarisation between the concepts of religion and spirituality would seem to me to parallel the apparent polarisation of the Christian secular divide. How then does one integrate a deeply held faith in Christ, with a philosophical worldview and body of knowledge where belief in God and truth is passé, possibly irrelevant and non-politically correct? For me it is entirely the opposite - present, real and relevant. This sense of a dichotomy created feelings of unease and angst for me as I sought to reconcile my strong convictions with the postmodern way of thinking, in the context of relativism. As I began to explore both worldviews in light of each other, alongside my own personal embodied experience, a passion was ignited, not in where there was division or difference but in how both worldviews connected. In my exploration of both I discovered many links and parallels that appeared to do just that. A real sense of intrigue and enthusiasm in exploring this connection at a deeper level ensued. I was able to reclaim a sense of inner harmony in and through the exploration and that exploration continues.

The challenge for me has been epistemological as noted earlier by Plante (2007) and Sperry & Shafranske (2005). As I began to consider my research interest further my struggle has been in finding an epistemological framework that accommodated my worldview leading me to a deep questioning and exploration of the very nature of epistemology itself - "how do I know?" Where was the value and credibility in my way of thinking and experiencing? Could my sense of inherent, intuitive, instinctual knowledge have a part to play in 'knowing'? How could I make sense of these aspects of my experiencing? The outcome of my experience, exploration and discovery on the course was that of 'coming alive' – a transformational experience of connection and integration of my faith, theory and practice. How did this come about? What

was going on to allow me to connect in this way? On what basis can I consider my experience of knowing as significant or valuable to the profession? How can I justify the connections made? These are the questions I need to explore in order to argue authentic space in academia and in counselling practice.

In seeking to find an integrative epistemological model with respect to integration of faith and psychotherapy, one could argue that James Fowler's Faith Development Theory (1981) fits the bill and at a certain level I would agree. Fowler, a theologian and developmental psychologist has created a model where he sets out to develop the idea of a developmental process in human faith as a result of empirical research undertaken. He sees faith as a "human universal", intrinsic to humanity – a quality of being which is integral to every day life, to being in relation and to growthful developmental change. He notes faith as a verb, an active way of knowing, involving a commitment of loyalty and trust to something or someone. He views it as a relational enterprise where the concept of trust is intuitive and begins at birth and further developed in childhood and into adulthood through healthy parental bonding. Parents convey a sense of trustworthiness by the quality and consistency of their care. Fowler also advocates faith as 'imagination' giving form and meaning to our imagining of our ultimate environment – a tacit process. I can readily identify with much of Fowler's thinking and with a number of the stages of faith he advocates in his book. Fowler's model may have integrated faith with psychological theory, however, it does not fully account for my experience. I believe my experience and consequent research taps into something deeper.

John McDargh (2001) in his critique of Fowler's work notes a number of unexamined issues: the theological foundations of his project and the postmodern problem of foundations. How is it possible to write or speak meaningfully of a universally religious orientation ie faith in the generic sense Fowler advocates? Faith in this sense presupposes a system of universals. My inquiry at some basic level connects with these particular issues. I explore in detail my theological foundations as in my Christian worldview and how I see it connecting and accounting for psychological theory and practice and Polanyi's theory of knowledge. I engage with the postmodern problem of foundations as I seek to reconcile my own foundational stance. McDargh notes the postmodern problem of foundations as the problem of how to establish some kind of foundation for right judgment about human behavior that can be squared with the reality of constructed, societal and cultural conditioning. My curiosity and intellectual passion arising from this problem and the dichotomy I experienced propelled me to investigate further.

Conn (1998) also notes a correlation between religious belief and social science. He notes his guiding intuition as leading her to believe that the conflict between theology and psychology can only be resolved by articulating a foundational understanding of human behavior, which is recognised and affirmed by both entities. He advocates turning to philosophy to find the mediating construct. One could argue my research could be seen as a philosophical inquiry into the postmodern problem of foundations, based on a very personal concrete experience of integrating both domains.

1.6. Scholarly Guides

In my search for an epistemological framework I was drawn to a number of authors. I devote all of Chapter 2 to Michael Polanyi whose work is central to my inquiry. He introduced the concept of personal knowledge incorporating a tacit dimension which he argues is key in any act of discovery, pioneering a bridging of the gap between modernity and postmodernity. Whilst researching Polanyi I came across and connected with an author whose affinity with Polanyi tweaked my interest. Esther Meek (2003), a professor of philosophy in the U.S. has written, “Longing to Know” and extends Polanyi’s model of knowing even further to incorporate the question of knowing God. She notes her readership as those “who wrestle with questions concerning truth” (p.7) and affirms the challenges for those with Christian faith in this postmodern era, where many of the burning questions are epistemological. She proposes a model of ‘how we know’ based on the work of Polanyi and believes it to be confirmed by the ordinary day-to-day experiences of every human being. She believes that the influence of philosophy on all of humanity is pervasive and believes that Polanyi’s theory of knowing can impact for the better every walk of life. Meek’s model of knowing would seem to embody my own process of discovery on the course. One of my biggest problems as I came to my research topic was epistemological. Meek’s position recognises my struggle and gives me a platform to develop and work with both my belief in God and my sense of ‘truth’ and the discoveries I made on that basis.

I have reconnected with the writings of C.S. Lewis alongside Alister McGrath (who has written extensively on Lewis) and with Francis Schaeffer. Their writings and way of thinking has resonated with mine and tie in with Polanyi’s theory of knowledge and his passion for life and discovery. Their writings will inform my epistemological stance alongside the Bible which I believe to be my ultimate authoritative guide.

My engagement with C.S. Lewis and his writings came about as a result of watching a YouTube video where Alister McGrath (a research scientist and professor of historical

theology at Oxford University) presented a talk entitled “Telling the truth through rational argument” using C.S. Lewis as his example¹. As he spoke of the apologetic model Lewis used to argue his case for Christianity in his writings I had an epiphany moment (see Chapter 6). I had the feeling of it encapsulating beautifully my lived experience on the course – one of integration of heart and mind. I arrived on the course with a ‘heart’ (subjective) knowledge of God but as a result of my experience of questioning, learning and reflection I have connected with my mind and my ability to reason (objective knowledge), confirming what I believe in my heart to be true. McGrath (2014) brings together the major themes of Lewis’ work, uncovering some original insights while noting his commitment to the life of the mind alongside the life of the heart. Lewis had a distinctive understanding of the rationality of faith. Pure reason alone offered him a bleak intellectual landscape but his imagination taught him there had to be more. His visceral experience of the mystery of both ‘joy’ and ‘beauty’ led him to the conclusion that Christianity gave the intellectual framework that both interpreted the experience and led him to its true source. It provided the bigger picture. He believes personal human concrete experience points to the universal. Lewis writes:

I believe in Christianity in the same way that I believe the sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it, I see everything else. (1962 p.164-165)

This is entirely how I see it and where I’m coming from. Lewis saw Christian belief as the interpretive framework, which allows us to see and grasp things of intrinsic interconnectedness. His appeal was to both reason and intuition – a way of thinking that transcends the divide between modern and postmodern thinking.

Schaeffer (1912-1984) was an evangelical Christian theologian and philosopher who is most famous for his writings and his establishment of the L’Abri community in Switzerland where the deep questions of life could be explored without judgment. He believed Christianity could answer the problems and questions of any age. He argues that without a foundational solid stance in life there is no place for ‘truth’ of any kind. He also makes a strong argument that ‘God is there and He is not silent’ (1990). My unease throughout the course was one of there being a ‘missing voice’ – I felt there was no credible space for a belief in God and His indwelling presence.

I also engage with John Stott (2006), a theologian and influential writer, whose devotional reading at the early stages of my training impacted me and left a blueprint in my mind with relation to the concept of ‘Imago Deo’. I discuss this in Chapter 7. He notes 5 human inherent

¹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aAJh6Z9Q3c4>

qualities, which he believes stem from humanity being created in the image of God – that of rational, moral, creative, social and spiritual qualities. I link these aspects of self to psychological theory alongside my lived experience of them.

I began this chapter by introducing myself, my subject, the rationale behind my inquiry, my research question and my goals. I have given an outline of the professional programme and my trajectory through it, leading into my literature review focusing on the subject of integration of faith, religion, spirituality and psychotherapy. The reviews note this topic as a current topic of debate, with a desire for further engagement and where integration of both fields is deemed necessary but one, which is acknowledged as problematic. The concept of religion and spirituality as integral to personhood figures largely in the reviews but there is an inability to grasp their fundamental nature, leading to confusion and ambiguity. The onset of postmodernism and the questioning of objective truth has created divergent epistemologies leading to a separation of spirituality and religion, thus creating a vacuum. I note my own personal epistemological struggle and conclude this chapter by making reference to scholarly guides alongside the Bible as a canonical guide, which have been part of my journey tapping into the dialogical nature of this study. The following chapter will give a summary of Polanyi's work and theory of knowledge. In Chapter 3 I explore my methodology incorporating elements of case study, personal narrative and interpretive phenomenological analysis. I include an appendix with a glossary at the end of my thesis in which I list my key terms and my working definitions.

Chapter 2: Polanyi and Personal Knowledge – Ontology and Epistemology

“We can know more than we can tell” (Polanyi 1967)

In this chapter I introduce Polanyi and give an overview of his theory of knowledge. His theory of personal knowledge has been pivotal in helping me to make sense of my own personal experience of integration of faith and psychotherapy, thus offering an alternative epistemological position from postmodernism. I have divided the chapter into 6 headings. Under the first heading of ‘crisis of belief’ I identify with Polanyi and his sense of crisis in the area of belief and faith as a result of secularisation. In section 2 I note the problem I encountered as a believing Christian student, that of my belief in foundational or objective truth. In section 3 I relate the sense of passion that was stirred within me to pursue this inquiry tapping into my sense of inherent knowledge. Section 4 introduces the tacit element in Polanyi’s theory of knowledge and the role and significance of integration. In section 5 I identify with the link Polanyi makes between the personal and universal noting that my story is indeed personal to me but with universal value. Section 6 points to a theoretical gap between modernism and postmodernist philosophy where I join Polanyi in seeking a middle ground.

2.1. Michael Polanyi

Polanyi (1891-1976) was born in Budapest into an upper class Jewish family. He was both a scientist and a philosopher who made a profound contribution in both these fields in the 20th Century. He believed all humans are called to be a part of a “Society of Explorers” (1967). He saw huge potential in the creative potential and possibilities inherent in humanity, bringing new grounds for hope in an era of scientific skepticism. He saw ‘awe’ in the world, had an enthusiasm for life with a deep respect for truth while at the same time abandoning the ideal of exactitude (1964). His theory of knowledge is holistic and integrative in nature, incorporating body, mind, heart and soul. Jha (1997) argues that the central notion throughout Polanyi’s works is one of integration. Engagement and interest in his writing and theory of knowledge is growing among present day scholars. His theory has been noted as accommodating Christian belief and orthodoxy, ontologically and epistemologically, allowing for a sense of objective truth and encompassing a belief in universality (Schaeffer 1990, Torrance 1998, Meek 2003, Gelwick 2004). I find engagement with his way of thinking both captivating and energising.

My first encounter with Polanyi was as a student on the diploma course where he was cited briefly in the context of the sense of ‘indwelling’ of the client’s experience and frame of reference in the therapeutic encounter. I wrote in my notes “*Polanyi uses this term to describe a sense of oneness with knowledge*”. A seed must have been sown at this point. A number of years later as I began to think about my epistemological framework for my thesis, where my own personal experience was going to play a big part, Polanyi surfaced again. As I began to study him more closely I very quickly had a sense of resonance with his thinking and a sense of excitement grew at the possibilities inherent in my research, a personal reflection of a journey of exploration and discovery as a person of faith on a secular course. Polanyi’s theory of personal knowledge has grounded my inquiry allowing me to develop the ‘how’ question in my personal experience of integration, helping me to bridge the gap I encountered in my training and reconciling somewhat the schism between modern and postmodern ideologies.

My ontological perspective comes from my belief that every person is of infinite value with intrinsic worth (through being made in the image of God), that we are inherently wired to ‘know’ and seek out knowledge, therefore every story of personal experience has value, adding to the wider knowledge of humanity. My epistemological stance stems from the same premise, as humans with value we have the capacity to discover meaning in and through our experiences as we engage with both external and internal realities. My ontological and epistemological leanings will be explored in greater detail and developed further into my inquiry as I research the two fundamental questions that took hold of me during my training, that of “How can I know?” and “Who am I?” My exploration of and developmental thinking in response to these questions, ties very closely with Polanyi.

2.2. Crisis of Belief

Polanyi posited a new way of thinking for all society, offering an alternative epistemology, in the light of what he viewed as a crisis of civilised culture where there was no longer a ‘centre’ of value, where all belief was reduced to the status of subjectivity. This had come about by the collapse of ultimate and unifying beliefs and foundations, the existential crisis of the day leading to a crisis of meaning and purpose. He wanted to move away from scientific skepticism which removes the ultimate belief that objective knowledge is possible and recover our ability to believe with confidence and to re engage with our sense of intrinsic faith – involving a personal commitment to a belief in the natural and normative rhythms and patterns of life (1969, 1975). Polanyi believed this fiduciary character, integral to tacit knowledge, to be essential in all scientific inquiry. In his theory of personal knowledge he establishes the validity of tacit knowing and wants to reconnect with our intrinsic powers of

understanding (1967). In his book 'Personal Knowledge' (1958) Polanyi uses terms such as confidence, in his discussion of truth and the knower's ability to receive it, where truth is equated to knowledge and reality. To destroy belief Polanyi argues is to deny all truth.

I am a believer. I believe Jesus Christ (God incarnate) to embody truth and I believe that He reveals His truth through nature, human nature and His word, the Bible. I have chosen to trust what I believe to be true on the basis of personal experience (encompassing both heart and mind) and external realities. I believe that same crisis of belief is evident in society today where relativism has taken hold and a sense of ultimate meaninglessness pervades and yet the pursuit of meaning and purpose remains relentless. Muncey (2010) writes of the challenge of mutual understanding in 21st Century as being one of greatest dilemmas in this century; that of a lack of shared understandings. Research carried out by Heintzelman & King (2014) in their inquiry into "how meaningful is life in general?" in the context of 'meaning in life' as having a sense of purpose or significance and being a necessity of life, conclude that meaning in life is relatively commonplace and possesses significance. Frankl (1985) in 'Man's search for meaning' notes that "the will to meaning" (striving to find meaning in one's life) is the basic motivation for human life. Van Manen (2015) sees the human being as "a person who is a flesh and blood sense maker" (p.14). All of this resonates with me. Meaning and the pursuit of meaning I believe to be ubiquitous in all of humanity. My clients are mostly desperate for their lives and experience to make sense, to hold purpose or meaning. My Christian faith has given me both purpose and meaning. Polanyi argues that the modern mind has destroyed meaning and wants to restore a sense of fundamental meaning in the life of 'contemporary man' (1975) through "recognition of the existence of meaningful order in the world" (p.v).

2.3. To Hit Upon a Problem

Polanyi (1969) writes that discovery requires the knowledge of a problem: "To hit upon a problem is the first step to any discovery and indeed any creative act" (p.131). Science according to Polanyi, lives by discovery, without the itch to solve problems, to follow hunches, science would cease to exist. Gelwick (2004) writes of Polanyi's paradigm of knowledge as a 'Heuristic Philosophy'. The Greek word 'heuriskie' means to find or discover. Polanyi equates knowledge with research where both are on the move "towards a deeper understanding of what is already known" (1969 p.132). The knowledge of a problem is 'a knowing of more than you can tell', a possession of something which passionately strives to validate itself. Such is the heuristic power of a problem.

As noted earlier the problem I hit upon was that of 'truth', foundational truth, a central tenet of my Christian faith and the challenge of negotiating this concept in psychotherapy both theoretically and in practice within a postmodern setting. A large part of the literature and theories taught in the dialogue during the diploma centered on the concept of truth in terms of the language used – terms such as the 'true self', 'false self', 'real', 'genuine', 'congruence' (one of the core conditions in the person-centred approach) alongside the essential concept of trust in any therapeutic relationship (Bond 2010). My questioning at this point was 'on what basis is anything true, real or trustworthy?' These concepts as I understood them, surely pointed to an essential aspect of being.

2.4. Intellectual Passion

Life for me needs to make sense. We seem to have an inbuilt curiosity, a striving to know. At the most basic level, Polanyi argues, we are driven by primordial intellectual passions to continually make better sense of the world. Curiosity, "the joy of seeing things," and "an urge to see sense and make sense" are all "proper strivings" which reflect the "essential restlessness of the human mind." Such innate drives promise to "enrich and enliven" us by extending our grasp of reality (Rutledge 2002). In Polanyi's view the pursuit of science is motivated by a passion to understand and the craving to understand actuates the whole mental life of man (in the sense of all of humanity). He notes in 'The Study of Man' (1959):

Mental passions are a desire for truth or more generally for things of intrinsic excellence (p.62)

This striving 'to know' and to understand has led me to investigate the two fundamental questions I explore in this project in seeking to gain a deeper understanding of the inherent qualities we possess as human beings.

Central to Polanyi's thinking was the belief that creative acts (or acts of discovery) are charged with strong personal feelings and commitments (1969). He argued that informed guesses, hunches, intuitions, feelings, memories and imaginings (clues) which make up acts of discovery are motivated by 'intellectual passions' aimed at discovering truth. Polanyi termed this pre-logical phase of knowing as tacit knowledge or tacit truths, knowledge already embedded within the person, knowledge that allows discovery and integration to take place. Polanyi argues that the tacit element in knowing is in fact the dominant principle of all knowing.

2.5. Tacit Knowledge and Integration

Polanyi's new model of understanding resulted from his own personal experience of scientific discovery, drawing on what had gone before and reorienting it and developing it. The question of 'how' natural science makes discoveries led to his discovery of tacit knowing. Natural science is about discerning patterns that indicate a true coherence in nature. Polanyi uses the nature of science as the model for his logic of discovery. He notes that seeing a pattern is the outcome of an intentional effort of the person to seek and find coherence resulting from an inherent belief (the fiduciary element) that we entrust our minds to the orderly and reliable nature of the universe. Knowledge then comes about as the integration of differing parts or clues come together in the recognition of a comprehensive whole. The power of science is to make contact with reality (1958). In natural science the connection is with nature and in social science the connection is with human nature. So acts of discovery involve the person where our bodies (containing both our mental and sentient capacities) are seen as the instrument by which we know the world. Polanyi (1969) writes, "such is the exceptional position of our body in the universe" (p.148). Meaning can't be understood or communicated without the person who has indwelt it. This concept of indwelling is a vital element of tacit knowing (1958, 1967, 1975).

Polanyi believed Personal knowledge to be made up of two aspects of awareness, that of focal (attending to/explicit) and subsidiary (relying on/tacit) (1969). We rely on clues to become focally aware. Knowing occurs both tacitly and explicitly. Tacit knowing is the integration of subsidiary and focal awareness. Polanyi drew on Gestalt psychology to account for the logic behind tacit knowing. He writes:

Scientific knowing consists in discerning gestalten that indicate a true coherence in nature (1969 p.138)

Gestalt psychology provided the clue for how we perform these acts of integration, the jump from the particular to a meaningful whole. The structure of tacit knowing is manifested most clearly in the act of understanding, a grasping of disjointed parts into a comprehensive whole:

We cannot comprehend a whole without seeing its parts, but we can see the parts without comprehending the whole (1959 p.29).

Tacit powers then enable one to comprehend or make sense of experience. We go from feeling something is problematic to another position we find more satisfying, the 'aha' moments, making sense of something, then holding it to be true. The theory of personal knowledge offers an interpretation of meaning with universal intent. When you believe that

your discovery reveals a hidden reality you will expect it to be recognised by others, the logic of verisimilitude. Polanyi engages with our ability as humans to feel and to reason, connecting once again with an aspect of our personhood, which had been somewhat banished as a result of the failures of the Enlightenment era. My own sense of reason and logic has been reignited as a result of my engagement on the course. Polanyi (1959) notes “man’s capacity to think is his most outstanding attribute” (p.11)

My whole experience of the counselling and psychotherapy course and in my practice to date has been one of integration. As a result of studying in the dialogue of person-centred and psychodynamic theories I have developed an integrative model of counselling incorporating fundamental aspects from both. I believe them to be essentially complimentary. A third element however, was coming into that space, calling for my attention; that of my Christian worldview and my personal belief in and commitment to foundational truth and its relation to the theories taught. A further process of integration was taking place as I questioned, grappled with and interrogated all the concepts and theories that were coming my way in the light of my Christian worldview.

2.6. Personal, Responsible and Universal

My story is a personal one. I am also an active agent in my story. Polanyi (1958) sought to reconnect the ‘person’ in the act of knowing and to seek to show that our actions are a result of how we know. Knowing is personal in the sense of involving the personality of him or her who holds it but not in the sense of self-indulgence. It is accompanied by a compelling sense of responsibility for the pursuit of a hidden truth. Polanyi sees the person as an active responsible agent in any act of knowing, where the emphasis is on the personal participation of the knower alongside personal responsibility. Polanyi sees the responsible knower as actively integrating clues to discover meaning. It is neither an arbitrary act nor a passive experience but a responsible act claiming universal validity, removing it from pure subjectivism. Knowing for Polanyi is fundamentally a responsible human act of commitment. He argues we actively interpret what we see. It requires an intellectual commitment involving faith (the fiduciary element mentioned earlier). Polanyi also makes it clear that part of this fiduciary act in holding or believing something to be ‘true’ involves an element of risk. Seeking to know with universal intent Polanyi believed to be the calling of our human nature. My deeply felt sense of the personal pointing to the universal ties in with this calling.

In developing an epistemology of personal knowing Polanyi argues that the making of knowledge is rooted in both discovery and tradition. He emphasises the balance between

personal knowing and the framework that exists within our backgrounds, (family, culture, faith, the world itself). Polanyi calls for both (1958, 1964). He does not view personal bias as limiting or hindering. Polanyi notes the importance of guides when seeking knowledge where the personal participation of the knower is involved in taking personal responsibility in assessing the weight and the accuracy of the teaching, direction, writing or guides. My own tradition and bias is that of my Christian faith, where I view the Bible as an authoritative guide.

2.7. Bridging the Gap

My experience of not being able to find an ontological or epistemological framework to house my project in, points to there being a gap in current secular training with its emphasis on social constructivist theory. I argue this is not fully representative of all theories of knowledge. My research seeks in some measure to explore and bridge this gap. My experience as a student was primarily one of connection (interpersonal) in spite of holding different fundamental views or ideologies leaving me curious over this dichotomy. Polanyi proposes an alternative way of knowing - a way of knowing that bridges the gap between positivism and relativism (between modernism and postmodernism). Where his theory connects with postmodern thinking is in giving assent and validity to personal experience. His theory extends that value in recognising and placing validity and significance to the tacit elements of personhood. Where his theory differs is in his goal to 'reconstruct' as opposed to 'deconstruct' (Gill 2000). Polanyi's theory of knowledge is one that builds, connects and integrates. The emphasis in Polanyi's theory of knowledge is one of belief or faith and the emphasis in the postmodern theory is one of doubt or skepticism. Postmodernism in the context of relativism has removed a unified foundation for knowing where at its extreme nothing can be known or supported and nothing has meaning leading ultimately to nihilism (Grbich 2007). In his book entitled 'Meaning' (1975) Polanyi attempts a rapprochement between these two cultures. He seeks to restore meaning through his development of the concept of personal knowledge, encompassing elements of our being which are intrinsic to being in all of humanity, our shared human realities, that of our tacit components. His thinking deeply resonates.

Chapter 3: Method and Methodology

In this chapter I discuss my research design, methods and process. I am drawing on case study, personal narrative and personal and theoretical identification with principles in interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). My research process parallels that of Polanyi and his methodological approach. Finding a coherent academic methodological framework for my project has been challenging.

I was initially drawn to autoethnography as a medium for my research. Autoethnography privileges the individual, where personal experience is viewed as a legitimate source of empirical data, a means of understanding culture through personal experience (Muncey 2010). As research students we were encouraged to find our own authentic voices and I was intrigued by the differing cultures I found myself part of and felt this would be an ideal platform to work from. There was a clash however with the underpinning postmodern philosophy in which meaning is understood to be purely contextual to the individual and their personal subjective experience and circumstance, one which discourages any engagement with metaphysics or any sense of a metanarrative. My lived experience during my training was one of connection and integration and my research would be focusing on shared human realities, which assume a sense of both the transcendent and universal knowledge. I felt a real dissonance between my own experience and the postmodern narrative I was engaging with. An integral part of my lived experience is intrinsically related to my most basic beliefs and values, a part of me that I value, and one which I was unable to dismiss or bracket off.

In the absence of connecting with a single designated form of research methodology my research design has become largely an organic and intuitive process encompassing elements of different methodologies. Nelson (2009) notes that qualitative research is often more a philosophy or attitude than a specified methodology where the key attitudes are openness and flexibility in the research process, where understanding is key. The best way I reckoned to explore my process of integration was to tell, articulate and reflect on my story, allowing for an instinctual developmental and dialogical process to take place in and through the writing. In spite of the challenges I encountered I had a deep sense of faith that the mode of inquiry would fall into place and that there would be an outcome. Polanyi believes all scientific research is rooted in faith, as in an intuitive belief and natural sensibility to discovery (1969).

3.1. Paradigmatic Case Study

My research has taken the form of a paradigmatic case study, a reflexive analysis of my story of my lived experience as a believing Christian on a secular academic course. Case studies come under the umbrella of qualitative research and are central to the practice of counselling and psychotherapy in helping to generate evidence based practice. Flyvbjerg (2001) maintains case knowledge as central to human learning. In writing my own personal case study I am generating further empirical evidence to draw on. Aveline (2005) in his paper on case studies notes Harry Sullivan, a neo Freudian psychiatrist who advocated that human beings are more similar than they are different, where the similarities are the 'essential enablers for psychotherapy'. There is enough similarity that we can learn from each other whilst at the same time there is enough difference for us to remain unique individuals. Mason (2002) notes that research needs to speak beyond the purely personal, with a call to generate convincing arguments or stories. The focus of my inquiry is on connection and integration where the personal points to the universal. Polanyi (1958) writes of the "universal intent of personal knowledge" (p.65) where in any act of discovery "the personal and the universal mutually require each other" (p.308). In his theory of personal knowledge Polanyi seeks to reassess and validate normative personal experience.

The etymology of the word paradigm derives from the Greek word, meaning pattern, combining two parts - 'para' meaning beside and 'digm' meaning to show, so could be defined as to 'show side by side'. Part of my research process has been exploring my engagement as a student with my own Christian worldview and belief in foundational truth and my sense of the secular postmodern worldview as largely discouraging any concept of objective truth. One worldview focuses on belief and the other on doubt. How does one bridge that gap? The tension I felt in relation to co-habiting these differing 'spaces' is what has brought me to this place of inquiry, seeking to find a synergy between them.

According to Guba & Lincoln (1994) a paradigm can be defined as the,

basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in the choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways (p.105).

One that deals with ultimates. They write,

It represents a worldview that defines for its holder, the nature of the "world", the individual's place in it and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts (p.107).

This is exactly how I view my Christian faith. The authors note that this type of data can provide rich insight into human behavior and that by making our assumptions explicit we can create a vehicle for dialogue. Through the writing of my story I am both making my assumptions clear and explicit whilst creating space for dialogue. Mason (2002) writes of research as “the making of arguments, the construction of a perspective, a line of reasoning or analysis” (p.173) where arguments are sets of ideas expressed. She notes making arguments as a relational process, inviting dialogue, “akin to a series of conversations” where the arguing is interpretive, narrative and reflexive, a process where the researcher is thinking about and engaging with those whom the argument is being made as well as the grounds on which the argument stands. My study is a dialogue in which I explore the rich ambiguity of the interface of religion, faith, spirituality and psychotherapy in a secular space. My research methodology is both dialogic and dialectic. Dialogic in the sense of it being written in the form of a dialogue, presuming an active audience with the desire to promote and stimulate further thought and engagement with this topic. I am also dialoguing with multiple voices in the sense of engaging with other authors. Dialectic in that it relates to the logical discussion of ideas with an assumption that all paradigms have something to offer. My narrative is a developmental epistemological argument using my Christian worldview alongside Polanyi as the grounds on which my argument stands.

Flyvbjerg (2001) notes that paradigmatic case studies, due to their intuitive nature may be difficult to summarise into neat methodological categories, often a sign they have uncovered a rich problematic. I believe my case study throws light on a rich problematic, the postmodern problem of foundations as noted by McDargh (2001) in my literature review, and as such is of significant value. In this sense I believe my story can be representative of all who struggle with strongly held foundational belief systems on secular academic courses and more particularly of those with Christian faith who struggle with the underpinning relativist postmodern philosophy. Polanyi (1969) writes, “the knowledge of a true problem is indeed a paradigm of all knowing” (p.117) Case studies also allow for exploration of process. Aveline (2005) writes that the capacity of case studies to communicate complex ideas and processes is unequalled. I have written about my transformational experience as one of integration of ‘heart’ and ‘mind’, both a complex idea and process.

3.2. Personal Narrative

Narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind...it is simply there, like life itself (cited in Riessman 2008 p.4)

My project is framed within my story, a direct testimony of personal experience, tapping into the value placed on personal experience in qualitative research. Jenkins (2013) notes story as “the most enduring expression of human culture”(p.141), a universal gift shared by humanity worldwide. Stories, in helping to connect the dots bring a sense of coherence to life and experience. I could term my story as a ‘meaning making’ story, one that attempts to make sense of my experience of integration and connection on the course, offering my particular interpretation to you the reader. Bondi (2013b) notes both research and psychotherapy as meaning making projects. My personal narrative is bearing witness to my lived experience and in the process meaning is extended. The word ‘narrative’ is derived from the Latin verb “to know” and “to tell”, connecting two essential aspects of the narrative turn. As I write my story I am seeking to ‘know’ (to understand), to dialogue, make sense of my experience and to ‘tell’ (articulate and express). Polkinghorne (1988) who was influential in developing the concept of narrative knowing believes we each have direct access to our own realm of meaning making made available through self-reflection or introspection in our mental realms. He also sees the realm of meaning making as an activity, integrating perception, memory and imagination. This process requires both action and expression. Slife & Gannt (1999) acknowledge that qualitative methods open up all experience for validation status including mental, emotional, spiritual and agentic aspects of our personhood. All of these personal elements, incorporating both heart and mind will play a significant part in my inquiry.

Polanyi, in his theory of knowledge emphasises the personal participation of the knower and validates the same personal innate qualities noted above, which he argues shape all scientific work, things of intrinsic value or ‘tacit truths’. He also sees the person as an active moral agent. He argues personal participation also involves personal responsibility in any act of discovery. We are both sentient and responsible beings (1975).

Aveline (2005) speaks of narrative as “an illustrative story... (one that) can stimulate imaginative thought, serving both to confirm and challenge existing theory and practice” (p.137). The act of telling can persuade, engage, argue, justify, reassess; these are all processes inherent in my research. My story captures my lived experience and details the journey of my experience in training and the impact in my thinking and practice, one that has both challenged and confirmed existing theory and practice both from a secular and Christian perspective. Polanyi also argues we all have frameworks we operate under. My Christian worldview grounds my thinking and way of being and the writing of my story has allowed for both expression and exploration resulting in a deeper understanding of that meaning system. I believe myself to be part of a much bigger story. MacIntyre (1984) notes that:

I can only answer the question “What am I to do?” if I can answer the prior question of what story or stories do I find myself a part of (p. 216).

3.3. Methods in Practice

My story has been written retrospectively, looking back on and making sense of my lived experience. I am no longer in that same space and my relationship with the setting has changed. I can now look back and reflect on my experience without the emotional angst or tension I felt while immersed in it. As a student I was in one process of inquiry (taking place organically) and as I entered the research phase I continued that process of inquiry more formally as my research project. The writing and analysis of my story has allowed for a developmental process to take place. I have continued the process as Joan the researcher reflecting back on Joan and her lived experience as the researched. I can identify with Bondi (2013b) who notes the significance of the gap between personal lived experience and its narration and uses the psychoanalytic concept of the 3rd position (person or observer) to illuminate the gap. The 3rd position enables us to observe the world around us in all its varied forms and become observers of our own experiences. Moving into this position is exactly what I have done as a researcher. My stepping back has allowed for further curiosity, thought, reflection and insight.

Mason (2002) writes of people as data sources “in the sense they are repositories of knowledge” (p.51). My engagement with and experience of inhabiting my training space formed the basis of the data I am drawing on to conduct this research, data that occurred naturally. My data sources are personal drawing from memory, thoughts, ideas, feelings, faith and experience. Polanyi (1969) notes these as personal aspects of ourselves, which he refers to as clues; elements that make up the tacit or implicit aspects of knowledge, which he argues are key in research. I am also using text as a data source, drawing on archival material from my father, academic designated literature and books from the course, academic writing and assignments, journals and personal note taking. Part of my research process has been noting and reflecting on my engagement with the literature and in how I expressed myself in terms of annotations - highlighting, underlining, use of asterisks, exclamation marks, question marks and words which conveyed my thinking as I was reading, noting connection, dissonance or curiosity. The margins were frequently annotated with the letters BP (biblical perspective, noting any correlation with the content to my belief system), sometimes with a question mark and others with an emphatic ‘No’.

I began my research process by reading through all the designated readings for each week during my training and making separate notes in areas that pertained to my research interest resulting from both my feeling of dissonance in relation to my belief in truth as well as feelings of resonance and connection and my developing interest in the innate qualities present in humanity. I engaged with the writings of my 'guides' as noted in my literature review. I made extensive notes on all my reading noting where there was resonance with my belief system, the theories being taught and in my spirit. This was an intentional process of seeking out what resonated within me, what 'ringed true', allowing for intrinsic bias. I had the sense of oneness with what I was reading, a feeling of energy and coming alive. Polanyi notes we are embodied creatures where our bodies are considered instruments of knowledge, where knowing is grounded in the body. We rely on clues within our bodies to make sense of experience encompassing both cognitive and subjective intrinsic powers. He writes: "to be aware of our body in terms of the things we know and do, is to feel alive" (1959 p.31). This awareness is an essential part of our existence. Resonance has played a big part in my process of inquiry.

Polanyi notes resonance as an intuitive response to making contact with reality where intuition is part of the tacit dimension of knowledge, the most primitive form of human knowing, as a result one, which is difficult to articulate clearly. He believes intuition is guided by an innate sensibility to coherence, by a sense of obligation towards the truth (1958). Polanyi believes all knowing starts and ends with experience but in order to make sense of that experience we have to employ an 'intuitive mode of apprehension' as in an intuitive belief in the rational order and patterning in life (1969). Flyvbjerg (2001) notes intuition as "a property which each individual uses in very day life" with "the ability to draw on one's own experience, bodily, emotional, intellectual" (p.21).

As I reflected on my reading and notes themes began to emerge which were feeding into my research question and inquiry, such as 'relationship', 'love', 'truth', 'spirituality', 'innate qualities'. I created separate files under these specific themes. Once I felt I had done enough background reading and preparation I began to write my story. I would sit at my computer surrounded by my files and handwritten notes and engage with the topic on hand, drawing together the clues as it were, seeking coherence in all the material. It has been very much an iterative process, toing and froing, reading and rereading, writing and rewriting as I have engaged with the data and related literature along the way. Gaining knowledge and understanding is a developmental and progressive process and one, which is never complete (Polanyi 1958). As I wrote and engaged with my notes and other related literature it felt like I

was in conversation with myself, my supervisors, the different authors and you the reader, showing my thought processes. It has felt a collaborative process. Watkins (2003) describes the dialogical nature of thought as “a mosaic of voices in conversation”, noting the diversity in dialogue and portraying the idea that when all the different parts are in harmony and connected with each other, they form a coherent whole.

As I began my process of inquiry I was intrigued by the concept of phenomenology and was given Jonathan Smith’s (2009) book on Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis by a friend. As I read the book I was drawn to elements of this approach but didn’t pursue it further. IPA surfaced again much later in the process and it has been constructive and enlightening to revisit the methods of my inquiry in the light of IPA and its fundamental principles and methodological processes. I will detail the elements that resonate with my inquiry and process and how it fits with Polanyi below.

IPA recognizes the central role of the analyst in making sense of his or her personal experience and understands the research as a dynamic process – an active and profoundly reflective inquiry (Smith et al 2009). This ties in with Polanyi’s emphasis on the person as a knower where action and intentionality are involved in seeking knowledge. Polanyi also notes research as an intensely dynamic inquiring where he relates understanding as a valid form of knowing, involving an active, intentional and responsible process (1958). The approach is idiographic where the focus is on understanding a particular experience but maintaining the notion of a shared humanity, which ties in with my own ontological stance and that of Polanyi and his focus on seeking knowledge with universal intent. Writing is at the heart of the process allowing for creativity, where the analysis is organic and becomes self evident in the process of the writing. The process is personal and intuitive, tapping into Polanyi’s tacit dimension in acts of knowing.

This approach embodies an analytic approach and is iterative in style. My initial process as with IPA has been one of active engagement with my original data in my research process (through reading and re reading my notes), the printed copies of my academic assigned literature, books and journals, noting my written annotations and reflections where my words and thoughts became the focus for my research. The next stage involved noting emerging themes. The third phase suggested is that of developing emergent themes and mapping connections and patterns and interrelationships. Some of these processes had begun informally in my head as a student but became an intentional process as I began my research formally. The recurrent themes became a set of parts that have formed a bigger picture.

Polanyi notes that knowledge comes about initially through the recognition of these patterns or clues and subsequently the integration of these parts into a meaningful whole - actively integrating clues to discover meaning. Smith writes of the hermeneutic circle where part of the material is seen as illuminating the whole and vice versa making the argument appear circular in places, which concurs with feedback from my supervisor. Polanyi argues that science operates by an intentional circularity that reinforces itself constantly (1958). This concurs with the idea of a 'ring of truth' where truth connects and is eternal. Smith et al (2009) note that other themes may emerge in the writing. Other themes did emerge as I progressed with my writing. My project combines discussion and analysis of related themes as I go along whilst engaging with extant literature at the same time.

IPA requires reflexivity, tapping into the natural propensity for self-reflection, recognising people as both self-reflective and self-interpretive beings (Smith et al 2009). Reflexivity is a key concept in qualitative research and plays a big part in counselling and psychotherapy theory and practice (Schon 1984). Kim Etherington (2004) notes reflexivity as making transparent the values and beliefs we hold and how they influence the research process and outcome. The researcher embraces their own humanness as the basis for psychological understanding where their own reflecting, intuiting and thinking are used as primary evidence. All aspects of self-reflection have played a big role in my research and analysis where intuition as noted earlier has played a significant part throughout the entire process. My lived experience of academic intellectual rigor has honed my capacity to think, reflect and reason. I am both the researched and the researcher in this project, the collector and interpreter of the data. I have made my Christian values and beliefs transparent and explicit noting my intentional use of my worldview as my interpretive stance.

One of the personal results from my research inquiry and process has been to illuminate my reflexive process already established resulting from a lifetime of spiritual discipline. This process for making sense of experience, which combines experiential, emotional, bodily and mental dimensions has been further developed through my lived experience of the course. This taps into the tacit dimension of Polanyi's theory of knowledge - that internal place where experience, feeling and meaning join together to form both a picture of the world and a way to navigate that world (1967). My Christian worldview alongside personal intuitive apprehension informs what I observe. My reflection is always linked to my knowledge and felt experience of God and His word, and His creation. This is where I look for inspiration and it consequently shapes what I see. My interpretation of course can be in error through being finite. This has become a part of my tacit understanding of the world and my place in it.

Polanyi notes that when using tacit powers we seek to clarify, verify or lend precision to something said or written. McLeod (2001) argues for a research tradition that is consistent with the practices and values of counselling and psychotherapy: such as human agency, collaborative and dialogical forms of meaning making, importance of feeling, emotion, role of language, capacity for reflexive self monitoring and the validity of sacred experience.

Polanyi argues that knowledge encompasses both tradition and discovery where both are related and necessary (1964). When writing about knowing as indwelling he refers to the utilisation of a framework for unfolding our understanding in accordance with the indications and standards imposed by the framework (1958). The point is not to free us from all prejudice but to reflect and alter those that disable our efforts to understand others and ourselves.

Van Manen (2015) writes of phenomenology as the attentive practice of thoughtfulness, a mindful wondering about the project of life, of living. It has as its ultimate aim the fulfillment of our human nature, to become more fully who we are. My exploration of my lived experience of seeking and finding authentic space is also an act of personal integrity. I concur with Wong (1998) in his paper on Meaning Centred Counselling in that he believes we cannot be authentic human beings without being true to our beliefs in what makes life meaningful.

In this chapter I have noted and argued a case for my project to be considered a paradigmatic case study on the basis of my position as a Christian, holding a Christian worldview and the secular, postmodern worldview I inhabited during my counselling and psychotherapy training. I have sought to outline my methodological process and stance, a pluralistic one incorporating aspects of personal narrative and principles of IPA, drawing on Polanyi and his methods of practice. The main links between Polanyi and IPA and my inquiry are the concern for sense making and the recognition of the centrality and validity of both personal subjective experience and mentation.

In my quest to answer my research question: “How does a believing Christian find authentic space on a secular academic course in counselling and psychotherapy?” I have identified 3 elements to my research inquiry, which were integral to my lived experience. These 3 elements make up the remaining chapters:

1. My engagement with and exploration of the academic space and a personal exploration and interrogation of my Christian belief in foundational truth, showcasing the problem I

encountered and the process of solving the problem, where the focus was discovering whether there evidence for my belief system - Chapter 4 and 5.

2. My experience of my process of integration. I relate and explore an epiphany moment, which created a feeling of 'heart and mind' integration. I engage with two fundamental questions I asked of myself, questions which had formed and were etched in my mind as a result of my training, that of "How can I know?" resulting from my introduction to philosophy on the masters' course and that of "Who am I?" resulting from my experience on the diploma – Chapters 6 and 7.

3. Resulting from the exploration and writing of the above bringing together the significant aspects of learning which allowed for the integration of Christian faith and psychotherapy to take place enabling authentic space to emerge. The findings have created the basis of a conceptual epistemological framework or model, which accommodates not only Christian belief but a wider and more generic concept of faith. My inquiry offers the potential for further development in this domain – Chapter 8.

My meaning-making story follows.

Chapter 4: My Story

‘In the beginning was the word’ (John 1:1)

“So... I do have a story!” A former client voiced these words enthusiastically and unwittingly one joyous day after months of agonising despair. He suddenly realised he had a story to tell. These six simple innocuous words felt liberating and life giving. He had connected with reality; he did actually matter and have a right to be in this world. I was bursting inside. The therapeutic relationship and process had enabled him to connect with his very painful past, acknowledge the impact of that in his present life and way of being and allow himself to tentatively hope and dream for his future. We all have a story to tell. Jenkins (2013) notes story as the most enduring expression of human culture and writes,

We live in a storied world...We live through the stories told by others and by ourselves (p.140).

I am going to begin this section by giving you an insight into my historical and religious background, leading to a discussion of the ‘space’ I found myself in as a mature student on entering the training programme, a space which drew attention to two differing foundational stances. Polanyi argues that our historical background, experience and bias should not be disregarded. He sees it as an integral part of our tacit knowledge. My experience of exploring, engaging with and working through my own personal story on the diploma course has led to an ongoing developmental process of change bringing new insights and meaning as well as affirming old ways of thinking and experiencing. On delving into my past I became acutely aware how my historical and religious background has deeply impacted my sense of ‘self’, ‘other’ and life in general.

4.1. Roots

My story began in the Andes Mountains, in a town called Puno situated close to the famous Inca ruins of Machu Picchu and Lake Titicaca. My parents were missionaries and their commitment and love for God and others was ‘alive’ in our home. Their faith was real and felt tangible. The two most memorable mottos in our home were ‘count your blessings’ and the golden rule of ‘treat others as you would have them treat you’. We didn’t have much in material terms but I always had the feeling we lived as ‘kings’! I never questioned the existence of God; He as far as I was concerned was the giver of life. The Bible was read in our home every day and I could see how precious it was to my parents. I understood it to be the living word of God, the authoritative guide for living and flourishing. As a child I loved

hearing the Bible stories and I always believed them to be true. My parents reflected a sense of a loving God who was interested in me and cared for me personally. Their legacy to me was one of showing and demonstrating what a true covenant relationship (involving commitment) with God looked like. I wanted what they had. I made my own personal commitment to faith when I was ten years old. I remember clearly kneeling down at the side of my bed with my mother and sister alongside me and with a childlike trust asking Jesus to come into my heart. From that point on, although my understanding was limited I had a growing sense over the years of my identity and purpose in life with a striving to know God better and grow in that relationship - an ongoing process.

My parents were both from farming backgrounds situated on the scenic north coast of Northern Ireland. They did not grow up in evangelical Christian homes but they both at separate times made a personal commitment to the Christian faith and felt a specific calling on their lives. They had to push against the tide of societal and family expectations on them at the time. My father was the eldest in the family and at the age of 20 witnessed his father die from a heart attack while ploughing in the field together. I enclose an excerpt from his autobiographical writings, which he began to write up during one of his visits to us as a family while we were living in Hong Kong, following my mother's death. Of his father's death experience he writes:

There followed a very trying time. As a 20yr old and the eldest of the family I found myself faced with the responsibility of managing the farm. With a very sensitive nature and already confronted with much criticism for 'leaving the church of his forefathers' this traumatic bereavement greatly increased the pressure and I sought advice from someone I had always looked up to. He took me aside and said: "John, your father is dead and gone now, and it is your responsibility to support your mother and manage the farm. You are going to have to attend the fairs and meet the public in buying and selling. Believe me, stop running to these "preachings" and be a man now". This hit me hard ... In the autumn of 1944 an unforgettable meeting took place. Not because of large attendances or a special preacher but on account of the Lord's manifested presence and voice unmistakably heard. I was responsible for leading the Bible study that evening. The Lord had directed me to read and speak from Isaiah chapter 6. I shared that I personally had heard him speak to me unmistakably. I had come to a crossroads in my life having met with the Lord. I was confronted with a challenge in regard to my personal preconceived plans and His call to submit my life completely to His will, not knowing where that would take me. I closed the meeting in prayer saying "no to self" and "yes to God". I knew that night I had entered into a covenant with God with regards to my future whatever the cost might entail.

My mother, during a ten-week stay in hospital with pleurisy also felt God speak to her about yielding her life to God and serving Him abroad. She and my father attended the same Bible training school where they got engaged and ended up as missionaries together in Peru where my three siblings and I were born. They spent 20 years serving their Father God in that country.

As I have reflected on their journey and experience of life it has struck me that my parent's decision to follow Christ in this way was not a result of social or cultural conditioning. There was huge sacrifice involved. John Lennox (2009), a philosopher of science and Christian apologist, writes of Christianity as being countercultural. He notes that had the character of Jesus not been a historical reality no one could have invented the story. He didn't fit and his ideology ran counter to the prevalent cultures at the time. He turned both culture and cultural norms on their heads, spending time with the marginalised, the poor, the sick, and the hurting and rebuked the 'religious' leaders at the time for their hypocrisy. He saw the heart...

Back to my story... We came back to Northern Ireland to live when I was 10 years old. I spent the next 8 years of my life living in the midst of the worst of the sectarian 'troubles' as it came to be known; a very real culture shock, leaving me with lots of questions in and around the Christian faith. Two sections of society both claiming allegiance to Christianity, were at war with one another to the point of death at the para-military level. There was also a great deal of tension, mistrust and even hate between the protestant and catholic communities at large. It felt quite a 'scary' place to be. My parent's attitude was that every person in this world is loved by God and therefore should be treated with respect; their motto was one of love not hate – that felt right to me.

I married the love of my youth when I was 22 years old and from that point moved away from Northern Ireland. We have been blessed with two wonderful children and have just recently celebrated our 35th wedding anniversary. Our journey thus far has taken us to England, Wales, Scotland and for the biggest part of our married life to Hong Kong – encompassing a very rich and varied experience of life to date with regard to differing cultures, people and ways of being. Wherever we have lived I have always enjoyed connecting with people from different walks of life, faith and background and my experience has served to open my mind to diversity in experience and culture. Every culture exhibits their own particular strengths (and weaknesses). We had a ready-made sense of community in our church family. I found a real sense of fulfillment during this time in my role both as wife to my husband and mother to my children. One of my greatest joys in life has been that of mothering my children, especially in the early years when they were so full of awe and wonder at life and what it had to offer and being able to share those experiences together. I have also had my share of significant challenges during these intervening years (a malignant melanoma diagnosis after the birth of our son, witnessing the slow decline and what felt like the untimely death of my mother as she battled the onslaught of bowel cancer to name two examples) but nothing in my

experience had served to seriously challenge my strongly held beliefs. In fact my sense and experience of God seemed strongest during the tough times.

As both our children flew the nest, our son to start University in Edinburgh and our daughter to finish her schooling in Edinburgh, I began to think about new possibilities. The idea of training to become a counsellor took hold and I investigated options within Hong Kong but my inability to speak Cantonese ruled that out. My husband then discovered the course in Edinburgh University and after much consideration I made the agonising decision to apply and consequently accept the offer. A decision which would require me to relocate from my home of 20 years in Hong Kong to live in Edinburgh during term time and maintain a long distance relationship with my husband, whose work committed him to remain in that beautiful and vibrant city. It did however feel the right decision and I had an underlying sense of peace. That both our children were also based in Edinburgh was also a significant factor.

So it was from this historical background and way of thinking that I entered this secular course, which has taken me completely out of my comfort zone. I arrived onto the certificate in counselling and psychotherapy with both anticipation and trepidation. It had been 30 years since my undergraduate degree. Would my brain cells actually work at academic level? I was a believing Christian entering the secular world of academia, how would I fit in? How would I cope with the long periods of separation from my husband? I knew it would be challenging on many levels. I came with the intention of completing the certificate and then happily return to Hong Kong. My goal was to use the course to hone my listening skills and learn how to counsel and to then use my learning in my role in woman's ministry in the church I belonged to.

How naive was I! I also need to confess a sense of underlying self-righteous arrogance in the belief that I held within me the answer to all problems - I knew Jesus. I still believe that to be fundamentally true but I see it from a very different perspective having gained such a wealth of knowledge and experience to build on that foundational belief. That journey began seven years ago and here I am writing a doctoral thesis. Not quite the path I had anticipated! Life does seem to work like that more often than not. It has been one of the most challenging of my life experiences to date but one that has been defining. I arrived on the course with what I now consider as 'heart' (subjective, experiential) knowledge of God, reminding me of a chorus I used to love to sing as a child, which reflects my sense of Him being an integral and essential part of me:

He lives, He lives,
Christ Jesus lives today,
He walks with me and talks with me,
And tells me I am His own,
He lives, He lives
Salvation to impart,
You ask me how I know He lives,
He lives within my heart.

I will be leaving the course with what I now view as an integrated ‘heart’ and ‘mind’ knowledge of God, incorporating both subjective and rational experience. Both these aspects of knowledge are part and parcel of Polanyi’s integrative theory of personal knowledge, one where there is a natural affinity to knowing and being (1969). How did that come about? I want to begin my exploration by having a look at the space I found myself immersed in as a student – a space that housed a number of differing cultures.

4.2. Secular Space

I remember well my first day on the certificate. I had no idea what to expect and as noted earlier was holding both fear and anticipation. As I entered the room I remember the feeling of shock when I saw chairs laid out in a circle with no desks. I was already feeling a sense of vulnerability. I wanted the solidity and comfort of a desk in front of me. We were a group of over 20 students where I was aware of difference and diversity in terms of background, age, gender and life experience, but from the onset was keenly aware of my sense of relational connection. My initial sense of fear dissipated to some extent as I felt acceptance and no sense of judgment on a personal level from my tutors. We were being introduced to the dialogue and I very quickly ascertained the environment was one which embodied the core conditions of unconditional positive regard, empathy and congruence as proposed by Carl Rogers in the person-centred approach (1967). This sense of the space felt life giving and energising. It was also a challenging space, one in which we were encouraged to confront our defense mechanisms.

In our group process work we were always encouraged to think about where our feelings were coming from, the root cause as it were. It appeared that there was always a reason behind how we felt, possibly coming from unmet needs from our childhood or external and societal conditioning. I began to understand that strong feelings and reactions were in some way irrational. I remember also having personal responses to what I was hearing from others and how it was affecting me, which I felt were purely rational or natural responses, inherent to humanity. Often it felt simply a feeling of compassion to my fellow peer in response to what they were relating. I also remember feeling an ache in my spirit over hearing one of my peers

speaking of her gentle spirit in a denigrating way as a result of her experience on the course. I saw that aspect of her as innately beautiful. An underlying sense of unease began to take root in my being as I struggled with a sense of there being no sense of ultimate right or wrong and no foundational basis to ground my feelings or thoughts on.

Much further into my experience as I began to think about my research inquiry and my articulation of the demarcation between Christianity and the secular space in the wording of my research question, and questioning from my tutors and supervisors, I entered into a personal mental inquiry and investigation into the term secular. When I began the course I deemed it to be 'secular' in the sense of it being non-Christian (ie not encompassing Christian belief). My own personal lived experience of deep connection as a Christian on this secular programme and space has served to encourage further exploration and questioning of the concept of the secular and explore 'where' on the programme my sense of secularity resided.

4.2.1. Counseling and Psychotherapy Culture in Scotland

I was immersed into what appeared on the surface two differing cultures, the postmodern outlook (in the context of there being no foundational stance to ground belief on) in the academic establishment and that of the counselling and psychotherapy ethos and practice culture with its Christian heritage. I read Bondi's (2013a) paper 'Between Christianity and secularity' where she investigates the interplay between religion and secular spaces in the world of counselling and psychotherapy in Scotland and its historical affiliation with Christianity. She argues that counselling and psychotherapy in Scotland has never been 'secular' where secularity is equated with an absence of religion. Bondi notes that from its inception counselling and psychotherapy in Scotland has been shaped by the Christian culture it encountered.

My experience of the counselling and psychotherapy ethos and practice culture concurs with this view. I view the fundamental counselling and psychotherapy values as embodied in the Christian faith. I recognised these same fundamental values in my peers and in my tutors, the desire to help and identify with those who are hurting. I was also pleasantly surprised to be given the opportunity to do my practice placement with agencies who were explicit in their Christian stance. I completed most of my placement hours with Crossreach Counselling Lothians and have been working very happily as a volunteer counsellor with them up to this point. Their mission statement of "In Christ's name we seek to retain and regain the highest quality of life which each individual is capable of experiencing at any given time" makes it very clear where their allegiance lies. I felt at home in this culture and space but had great

difficulty initially in my practice negotiating my strong sense of faith in the therapeutic space, leaving me with a sense of dissonance. This appears to be a common struggle experienced by counsellors in training (with strong religious faith) as has been noted in my literature review due to a lack of input in this area. I will explore this in more detail as I reflect on the 'postmodern' culture and my experience of it in the academic establishment further into this chapter.

On reading Bondi's paper I was left with a question over the concept of tolerance. Charles Taylor (2007) writes about secularism as the product of Christian reform. Secularity grew out of the Christian value of acceptance and respect for all peoples as the world and society was changing and moving away from an era where belief in God was a given. Secularism was born to allow inclusivity under the banner of tolerance. I wrote in my journal at the time:

April 2014: God and Christianity versus secular world - on reading Liz's paper on the historical links to Christianity in C & P had me thinking re what we mean by secular. Sense of the secular embracing all faiths and showing tolerance.... Christianity claims authoritative knowledge - the claims it makes are exclusive but the message is inclusive. Christianity assumes faith in a one true God!

This particular view in my experience is not readily acknowledged or tolerated in society in general and I had the sense of this particular belief as being problematic in the training academic establishment of the university. I note two occasions where I experienced a sense of discomfort in this realm during my training. On speaking with a colleague after one of our sessions and noting my sense of something being objectively true (I can't remember what it actually was but do remember her response) she responded by saying "you can't say that"; she actually agreed with me but we both had the sense we could not go there. On another occasion a colleague felt she had to apologise for bringing the mention of God into the person-centred group space. In all fairness the response from the tutor was that there was no need to apologise. However, why the reticence to speak of truth and God? Historically tolerance intimated the idea of recognising and respecting other's beliefs and practices without necessarily sharing them (meaning defined in Webster's dictionary). This was my understanding. I believe that every person has the right to be respected and that everyone has an equal right to believe what he or she chooses to believe but I don't believe agreement to be part of that equation. It is the person I value and give respect to not necessarily his or her worldview. I am wondering if secularism has developed to the point where it tolerates everything bar the one ideology from which it was born. Meek (2003) in her book 'Longing

to Know’ notes how the concept of tolerance which emerged from the Christian values of freedom and choice for all, has now shifted to one of intolerance to all who espouse belief and confidence in God. That part of me felt very uncomfortable in that space.

As I see it there is a definitive correlation between the values of Christianity and counselling and psychotherapy but there is no longer recognition of Christ, the source of those values or what He fundamentally stands for, the basic tenet of truth, as I understand it. One of the negative outcomes of secularity may have been the “creation of spaces in which religiosity is silenced and unintelligible” (Bondi 2013a p. 23). I would tend to agree.

Bondi refers to Cloke and Beaumont (2013) who write about the shift over time within the Christian world away from faith by ‘dogma’ (fundamental religion, with the aim and focus on converting others to the Christian faith) to an understanding of faith by ‘praxis’ (a positive relation to difference demonstrating faith in action without strings attached – unconditional love in action as it were). Our Pastor in the church I am a member of has just begun a series on the Nicene Creed, which he relates to as ‘dogma’ and this has encouraged further personal exploration. The creed was written in the 4th Century AD, a Christian statement of faith recorded in an attempt to unify the Christian church, which was exploding at the time. It focuses on the core fundamental issues relating to the Christian faith and has become a universally accepted and authorised statement of faith (McGrath 2011). The first statement declares: “We believe in one God”. I now understand ‘dogma’ as the core building blocks on which I live out my faith. Christian faith on the basis of what it believes should result in action, rooted in love for God, ‘other’ and ‘self’, where praxis stems from dogma. I also believe Christianity to be inherently evangelical. If I really believe in the ‘good news’ of the Gospel then it is impossible and arguably unethical not to share or communicate it in some way. This is a natural outworking of belief, where belief is considered more than personal opinion. There is a connection here with Polanyi’s concept of seeking knowledge where there is a personal ethical responsibility that comes with it. He argues belief can only be held with universal intent, a commitment to reality in which we assent to the universal validity of what we believe (1958, 1969).

Taylor (2007) writes about secularism as moving away from a society where a belief in God is unchallenged to one that is “understood as one option among others and frequently not the easiest to embrace” (p.3). I fully agree it is important to challenge and problematise any foundational belief system and my training space has given me the impetus and ability to do just that. Bondi (2013a) writes of a post secular rapprochement in her paper and quotes “the

hushed up voice of religion is being released back into the public sphere” (Cloke & Beaumont 2013 p.36). Perhaps as part of this post secular rapprochement there needs to be a re-examining of how we view the concept of tolerance where religious belief is recognised and given space. The following excerpt from one of my academic assignments writing retrospectively conveys the sense of the dichotomy I felt inhabiting the counselling and psychotherapy world and my growing sense of the postmodern worldview:

April 2014 “ I was immersed in a culture, which was fundamentally countercultural to my way of thinking and yet at the same time much of the experiential process and theory taught embodied many of the values intrinsic to my faith/belief system. The culture in part felt alien and in part felt very familiar. This created a real dichotomy for me.”

4.2.2. Postmodern Culture

I remember my very first meeting with my tutor where I discussed my concerns about holding strong views as a Christian. Our discussion developed into a conversation in which the concept of ‘conscience’ came up. I was asked: “What is conscience?” During our session I felt relational connection but left sensing we were singing off different hymn sheets at a fundamental level. This was a common feeling throughout my training.

When I joined the certificate course I had no concept of the ‘postmodern’ or what it meant. My research inquiry has allowed me to investigate this stance. I now understand it to be complex with no definitive meaning possible. Hale (2004) writes of postmodernism as possibly “the most prevalent philosophical movement in the west today”(p.1). She notes it as lacking a core ‘logos’ that defines itself singularly. However, as a result of my experience and engagement with some of the designated literature on the programme, I began to sense there was a unifying underlying sentiment and assumption, that of no belief in God, a metanarrative or in ultimate truth. I believe in all three! I can’t be a relativist and a believing Christian. Historically to be a Christian is necessarily “to affirm that certain things are (objectively) true about God, about humans and about reality” (Meek 2003 p.22). Meek notes that in this postmodern age all claims to confident knowledge are discouraged or discredited. My sense of this was noted in the excerpt below written as a reflection of the internal struggle I encountered:

September 2015: “Enter then an alien (for me) world where all truth is relative and where there is no explicit concept of right or wrong, all reality is socially constructed and where the postmodern philosophical standpoint (as per Nietzsche and Foucault) is one which

champions the death of God. Two very different worlds it seemed, to negotiate, engage with, try to reconcile and make sense of. On the surface they appeared to be poles apart – how could I possibly connect the two? Even the language felt alien. At some level I felt ‘intimidated’ and at another level I felt ‘safe’”

My intrigue with the concept of truth as noted previously began during the diploma as I was introduced to the differing psychological theories in the dialogue where the concept of truth was embodied in the language. In my practice based case study research assignment (BCR2 April 2014) as I reflected back on my experience on the diploma I wrote:

Much of the theory and practice is bound up in the concept of truth – words and phrases such as ‘real’, ‘authentic’, ‘true self’, ‘false self’, ‘congruence’, ‘coherence’ alongside the significant concept of trust which is vital in forming a therapeutic relationship. I see part of my role as a counsellor as enabling a loving space where trust can develop empowering my client to find the truth of his/her story whilst at the same time tearing down the lies and conditioning from the past – opening the way for new meaning and possible change.

One of our early readings as a student on the diploma course indicated postmodernism as a culture of problematisation and a site for critically rethinking the discourses of the past. It certainly has been that for me but that process has served to strengthen my Christian faith. My discomfort stemmed from the postmodern ideology, which was stated as the rejection of modernist beliefs, the rejection of a desire for unifying theories and the rejection of any sense of universal ‘essence’ (Lowe1999). The concept of ‘truth’ was very present in both the theories taught and in counselling practice but my question was ‘how so?’ and ‘on what basis? The concepts noted above all pointed to what I understood as a quality of ‘essence’ intrinsic to our being. There appeared to be no ultimate sense of truth. I became aware of an underlying internal tension and unease within me. Kahn & Lourenco (1999) write that the postmodern deconstructivist position asks that we abandon constructs such as truth, objectivity, logic and even rationality.

On entering the masters’ course as I began to engage with the body of literature (in particular that of autoethnography) it became more apparent where the tension was coming from, the focus on ‘truth’ as a purely personal phenomenon or the postmodern problem of foundations as McDargh (2001) noted previously. I felt both tension and conflict as I tried to reconcile my own foundational stance with that of the ethos of auto-ethnography as noted earlier. Muncey (2010) writes that personal story will emerge out of the juxtaposition of personal experience

and outside influences, and the interaction between the two, from the dissonance that occurs between one's own experience and the official narratives set out to explain it. I moved on from writing an auto-ethnographic piece of research but the sentiments experienced remained the same. Meek (2003) identifies and writes about this sense of tension that has come about with changes in the concept of truth and the way we approach knowing. Meek advocates the need to continue to search for a workable model of human knowing, otherwise we are being asked to settle for that which is untrue to our very selves. She argues skepticism (where nothing is certain apart from uncertainty) goes against what is intrinsic in our being; a longing to engage with what is real ie truth. Affirming no truth is an uneasy place. We live like we know and we yearn to know, we love the 'aha' moments when a fresh understanding takes place. I relate a personal epiphany in chapter 6. Polanyi argues we have an innate drive and passion to make contact with reality both in science and in life (1958, 1964).

Spry (2001) believes first-person accounts of personal experience, and their claims regarding truth, knowledge and values, are characteristically framed in terms of pre-existing master narratives. These master narratives claim to reflect the world as it 'actually' is, rather than conveying interpretive frameworks. All research is interpretive and I concur that in the analysis of my story as in my present case study, I am using the Christian master narrative as my interpretive framework but also need to be explicit in that I am using it precisely because I believe it to be true. As I see it, it does reflect the world as it actually is. I would argue that the belief encompassed in the postmodern relativist worldview could also be interpreted as a 'master narrative, an interpretive framework I presume must also be believed to be true. Both worldviews claim to reflect the world as it really is.

Muncey (2010) also writes of "the conspicuous absence of a worldview" that may prompt a response in writing. I can relate to that in that I felt a very real sense of absence of a space for a belief in God or transcendent realities. I am coming to realise that the "conspicuous absence" or silence as noted above may have added to my felt experience. I possibly read, 'irrelevance', even 'intolerance' into the silence. I see a correlation here with the psychodynamic concept of mirroring where the infant requires the mother to be a mirror in which he or she can see reflected a true image of self in order to regulate emotion and validate experience. A mother who offers silence or lack of acceptance can lead to a distorted view of self, resulting in internal conflict (Winnicott 1971). Although at one level I felt accepted there was a part of me I felt needed to remain hidden. I had the sense that my fundamental beliefs, integral to my being were not recognised and thus not given space, causing real dissonance in my spirit. I needed to be seen 'truly'. My voice in the context of being able to acknowledge my faith was

silenced, partly an intentional choice and a protective measure on my part. I held my belief in God to be so precious I couldn't bear the thought of it being disrespected and I knew I didn't have the intellectual rigor to defend my views publicly.

This same sense of dissonance also played out in my initial practice as a counsellor on placement. Although I connected and felt at one with the ethos of the counselling agency there was a feeling of disconnect in my practice. I had the sense I needed to bracket off my faith in order to be congruent to the academic training environment. This caused a sense of incongruence in my inner being and on reflection I believe was the reason behind one of my early clients choosing to end her therapy. She was not a Christian but asked me in one of our early sessions if I had faith? I answered in the affirmative but almost had a sense of panic thinking this was an area that was out of bounds. How do you negotiate faith in therapy? She was fascinated by people who had, in her words, "unswerving faith" (she spoke of noting something in my smile) and wanted to hear my story. I didn't feel I had the freedom to engage with this part of me, it felt like I was withholding and I didn't feel congruent in the relationship and sadly we parted.

I also experienced this sense of momentary panic at the end of a first session with a young man who was a Christian but from a very legalistic background and was carrying a lot of baggage from the past. As he stood up to leave he was almost childlike in anticipation and asked me "Is there any hope for me?" to which I immediately and instinctively replied: "there is always hope". I questioned momentarily had I said the right thing through fear of offering an expectation, which might be unrealistic or unattainable. I remember vividly my fear of sharing this incident when discussing my work in the practice and process group. As we discussed this together it was recognised that my sense of hope for this client was coming from a genuine place and therefore in the context of congruence was deemed appropriate. As I look back and reflect on that experience I realise my fear was in acknowledging a view I hold to be true; I believe there is hope for all outside of context or person or place. I wrote about my deeply felt sense of hope in the midst of a pervasive sense of hopelessness experienced during the person-centred group process during the diploma:

June 2011: Lots of different varying emotions have been expressed in the group – anger, rage, frustration, fear, regret, shame, anxiety, grief, sorrow, sadness, disappointment, confusion, despair, joy and compassion to name a few. Most of these emotions emanate from a place of hurt. I have experienced and can identify with all of them, but the one emotion, which has cut to the core of my being is that of 'hopelessness' – the elusive search for meaning in life. It

disturbs my spirit. This feeling was expressed regularly. The feeling of being “doomed”. Is anyone ever really satisfied? Does anyone ever really feel they belong? Are we nothing more than “worm food”? Is there any hope out there? My spirit within wanted to cry out “Yes - there IS hope” but... I was unable to voice it.

My engagement with the postmodern worldview left me with a question over the concept of hope, which I embody and bring into my counselling space. Thorne (2002) writes of person-centred therapy as a profound discipline offering a powerful message to the world, that of hope encountered in and through relationship. My experience of the person-centred group process development work left me with a further sense of disconnect. This approach focuses on the inherently positive elements of our personhood, emphasising the potential for personal growth and fulfillment and yet the sentiments expressed in the group as noted above were anything but hopeful. One of my peers at one point began to question the very reality of her existence. That disturbed me. Loughlin (1999), a professor in the department of theology and religion at Durham University describes postmodernism as “a complex cultural phenomena”, the dawning of an era with no tomorrow where there is no direction or ultimate point to our endeavors, no future. Perhaps this explains the sense of ultimate hopelessness I experienced in our group work. My own experience seemed to differ in that the process of engaging with the person-centred theory was affirming and strengthening my sense of ultimate hope in the light of my Christian faith. Meek (2003) writes: “to be human is to anticipate, to hope... we are eschatological beings” (p.130). Part of the reflective process in writing and evaluating my story is in exploring the ‘reason’ for the hope that is in me, both for myself and to showcase that process to you the reader. It is not enough to embody this sense of hope; I needed to evaluate the meaning behind it. Is it purely a personal feeling with no basis or possible justification? My exploration of this will continue in the following chapter.

Philosophical thinking has shifted dramatically over time. Postmodernism both follows and is a reaction to modernity. It appears to me to have gone from one extreme to another, from the modernist era where absolute truth was deemed possible through autonomous human reasoning alone to our present era where in its extreme form there can be no objective truth due to historical abuse of power and authority, the fallibility of mankind. Postmodernism has once again placed significant value on personal experience, but due to subjectivism no longer believes ‘truth’ to be possible or desirable. Tamas (2009) when writing about the usefulness of testimony notes: “particularly in these postmodern times producing truthful knowledge seems increasingly impossible or unethical” (p.4). It is this particular focus and assumption of postmodernist thinking that I find problematic in relation to my Christian faith. In asserting

any claim to be true there is of course always risk involved through being fallible beings. However, if we can get things wrong it stands to reason we can also get things right.

Polanyi acknowledges the shadow side of science and makes the element of risk involved in seeking knowledge very clear. That reality however, does not negate for him the possibility or the desirability of seeking truth in discovery. He argues the shadows represent a failure of scientific thought and not its essential nature. I concur with Polanyi, who in his theory of personal knowledge argues for a middle ground, where reason alongside personal experience work together to discover knowledge, where knowledge is equated with truth and reality, 'things of intrinsic value' as he states. Polanyi shows how positivism was not sufficient in the acquisition of knowledge; the personal, subjective element also plays a vital part, in particular the tacit dimension (1967). It is this elemental aspect of knowing which has tweaked my interest, one which encompasses intuitive, innate, instinctual and inherent aspects of our being as persons; our shared reality. Polanyi advocates tacit knowledge presupposes a system of universals.

At the heart of postmodernism lies a profound shift in epistemology which calls for the relinquishing of any claims to unique, absolute or transcendent truth, a high cost for those of us with Christian belief and conviction. Carson (2002), an evangelical theologian notes that in the middle of the 20th Century, Polanyi was demonstrating that science has intrinsic elements that go way beyond empirical explanation and evidence, which he called 'tacit truths'. Carson maintains that both natural science and Christian philosophy believe there is such a thing as culture transcending truth and that we humans have some access to it. Postmodernism has brought to our attention the reality that we as humans are finite beings and therefore perceive and conclude that all human knowing as partial, non-final and culture specific. I concur with the partial and non-final but I agree with Carson that the essence of truth is universal. Carson (2004) notes that "notwithstanding the genuine gains in humility brought about by postmodernism" (p.46) various scholars have argued convincingly that finite beings can know some things truly even if nothing omnisciently. Polanyi would agree. He believes human knowledge is genuine but not complete and wanted to restore confidence in knowing. In life as in research we all have a compulsion to know. We are instinctively a "society of explorers" in Polanyi's words, working together in discovery. I ask myself then why would this be the case if knowledge is purely personal and contextual.

In this chapter I begin by giving an account of my roots and religious background as well as a brief outline of my life leading up to entering the world of academia at post-graduate level. I

explore the secular space and the contrasting cultures I found myself in within that space noting the disconnect, one which acknowledges the Christian heritage and values embedded in its practice and the other which discourages the central tenet of Christianity, that of foundational truth. I have explored my developing sense of the term secular and the concept of tolerance and how the meanings have changed with time and the problems associated with the changes for those of us with Christian faith where the central tenets are axiomatic. I identify the source of the problem I encountered stemming from my belief in foundational truth. I noted the disconnect I felt in the person-centred group process contrasting my embodied sense of hope resulting from my Christian faith which had been enhanced through my engagement with the approach. I identify internal personal feelings of internal struggle and dissonance resulting from an engagement with a concept of truth as taught in the theories but having no basis to work from. The sense of dissonance is what led me to an in depth exploration of my belief in foundational truth on the basis of my deeply held sense of hope. Polanyi believes we are responsible agents and it is the person's responsibility to assess and evaluate the framework or worldview from which their beliefs emanate. My exploration of truth, the central tenet of my Christian faith or worldview follows.

Chapter 5: The Question of Truth

‘Love... rejoices with the truth’ (1 Corinthians 13:6)

In this chapter I set out the problem I encountered during my training, that of my understanding of foundational truth as a believing Christian. I discuss my engagement with the concept of social and cultural conditioning as taught on the course and the questions that arose in my mind resulting from that. I go on to give an account of my search for evidence for my strongly held beliefs followed by an investigation over the three related concepts of faith, belief and trust and the parallels I encountered in counselling and psychotherapy. I end the chapter engaging with Michael Lynch (2004) who argues that truth matters. The goal for this process of investigation was personal authentication and validation of my Christian belief system. I can only argue for authentic space if I can authenticate it to myself as an active responsible agent in this process of inquiry. I link my thinking with Polanyi where it resonates as I write.

5.1. Personal and Universal

The Oxford dictionary defines truth as “that which is true or in accordance with fact or reality”. Truth in this sense reflects the real world and presupposes an external objective reality. Historically the concept of truth was paramount to knowledge. In today’s postmodern worldview truth no longer holds this original meaning. We now officially live in a post truth era. All truth is subjective, relative to the individual, culture and context. I entered the course with a belief in objective or foundational truth. I also had the belief that meaning and truth are mutually interdependent, where day-to-day truth and meaning is grounded in ultimate truth and meaning. In my ‘Practice based case study research in counselling’ assessment (BCR2 2014) I was asked to discuss the research design and methods I intended to use for my research project, drawing on debates introduced on the course. I was really struggling to find an ontological, epistemological and methodological academic framework to work with. My thinking resonated in part with many of the debates engaged with but as far as I could see there was no space for a conviction of foundational truth. My introduction emphasises the problem I encountered and reads as follows:

I personally have a need and desire for my life to make sense, to have meaning and purpose. My hunch is that I am not alone in this pursuit – I believe it to be ubiquitous within the heart of humanity. As a result of my lived experience, observation and deeply felt connection with my fellow humans over the past five years as a student in the world of Counselling and Psychotherapy and in my counselling practice, I feel it even more keenly. We each have our

own individual life experiences, circumstances and unique personalities but it seems to me that our inner strivings / the essence of our being is the same. We are drawn somehow to ask the 'Big Questions' – Who am I? Where do I belong? Why am I here? As a believing Christian my Christian worldview has been pivotal in helping me to make sense of the puzzle of life in all its variety and complexity. My belief and appropriation of what it stands for has brought me both meaning and purpose in the here and now as well as ultimate meaning and hope for my future. So far so good you might be thinking. It gets trickier, however. My Christian faith stands or falls on the validity or otherwise of an exclusive claim of truth spoken by Jesus (God incarnate) while on earth when He spoke these words: "I am The Way, The Truth and The life, no one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Ouch! These words form the basis and foundation of my belief system and personal faith...

My sense of foundational truth is embodied in the person of Jesus Christ and all He stands for. The claims He made with respect to truth are exclusive and are often deemed offensive but His message is inclusive. The words of this song, encompass very simply my fundamental beliefs:

I believe in Jesus
I believe He is the Son of God,
I believe He died and rose again
And I believe that He's here now,
Standing in our midst,
Here with the power to heal now
And the grace to forgive².

As I engage with Polanyi and his terminology, this is the framework that 'indwells' me, a lingering presence (1969). It is both explicit and implicit. Polanyi writes of his belief in the presence of an external reality with which we can establish contact, a form of knowing he terms as "indwelling". In writing about his sense of a crisis in society over belief, Polanyi attributes this to there no longer being a belief in a higher power. All belief is reduced to the status of subjectivity. He sees a need to reinstate belief in the value and power of ideals such as truth, beauty, justice, love and respect and to restore the capacity to have faith in the ideals of our religious heritage and traditions (1967).

As part of the training as students we were required to challenge and accept challenge to all our assumptions. Bohm (2004) notes that when we dialogue we need to have a willingness to interrogate our most cherished attitudes, the core of our beliefs, we need to see what ideologies they are based on and be able to interrogate the function and effects of these beliefs.

² www.lyricsmode.com > vineyard

This is what I am seeking to do as I have been compelled to investigate my fundamental Christian beliefs further and critically evaluate my stance. I noted my particular issue with the concept of truth in the context of relativism in my 'Between Counselling and Research 1' assignment (BCR1 2012) in which we were asked to discuss an idea for research in the field of counseling studies and relate it to our personal narrative:

The problem for me in that is, in the reality of life truth matters and in order for there to be any concept of truth in its original sense, there must be an objective, referential base from which to work from. Relativism, as I perceive it, renders truth meaningless.

As part of my preparation for writing the above assignment I engaged with the thinking of a German theologian called Wolfhart Pannenberg and his thinking concurred with my developing thought processes. Grenz (1988) a professor of systematic theology quotes Pannenberg:

By nature, truth cannot be merely subjective... it can only be personal when it can be claimed at least in principle to be true for all (p.796)

It would appear that Pannenberg's sense of truth links closely with that of Polanyi where he emphasises the responsibility of the scientist to seek knowledge with 'universal intent', where he is guided by a sense of obligation towards the truth. If truth is revealed to one person that same truth would be expected to be seen or experienced by others if not immediately, in time. Truth endures (1958, 1964). Pannenberg battled against subjectivism as does Polanyi, the doctrine that knowledge is merely subjective with no universal application. Pannenberg believed Christian faith is grounded in historical fact, where truth is essentially historical and ultimately eschatological. We won't have complete and full knowledge until the eschaton. I am reminded of the verse in the Bible where the apostle Paul is writing to the Corinthian believers on the subject of love and writes in 1 Corinthians 13:12 "For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known". This verse has taken on new meaning for me as I integrate the fact that full and complete knowledge as pursued in modernist times is not possible. Tamas (2014) writes about what happens to our knowing when we enter academic spaces. She notes the cost involved when 'doubt' enters that space and how students lose their ability to personally bind belief to certainty. Is the brain ever able to get over its need to know with certainty? Perhaps this striving comes from us being eschatological beings as noted by Pannenberg and Meek (2003) earlier. My own experience of entering the academic space has been one of enhancing my faith but with a fresh understanding that knowledge is only ever

partial but can be definitive nonetheless. Schaeffer (1990) writes, “All people, whether they realise it or not function in the framework of some concept of truth” (p.155). He believes we were made for truth. Schaeffer endorses Polanyi’s theory of knowledge and writes of him championing truth but as failing to give a base as to how truth can be epistemologically known to be truth.

5.2. Societal and Cultural Conditioning

I have come to understand that we all see life through different lenses as a result of cultural, social and historical conditioning and we each come with our own personal interpretations. My engagement with societal and cultural conditioning was developed further as I entered the masters’ course. My first encounter with Foucault and Nietzsche, both philosophers who were instrumental in highlighting these realities was through reading our course textbook ‘Making Social Science Matter’ (Flyvbjerg 2001). As I noted earlier, at this point I was beginning to get a deeper insight into the foundational philosophical underpinnings of the social science establishment, which in my mind appeared to jar with the roots and foundational ethos and values in counselling and psychotherapy. The tension I was feeling was not with the theories or values being taught or relational but with my sense of the underlying philosophical ideologies reflected in some of the literature. Flyvbjerg embraces both Nietzsche and Foucault’s philosophical standpoint in his writing of his book. They argue that we are socially and historically conditioned, “the only solid ground under our feet” (p.101). All norms are based on historical and personal context with no universal grounding independent of the individual or their particular context. I have not studied Foucault or Nietzsche in any depth but in my limited understanding the argument would seem to be that our culture and background fully determines our belief system: they are social constructions, cultural interventions perpetuated to serve the power plays of the religious and cultural elites that stand behind them. There is no foundational knowledge.

My own experience of coming to faith as reflected earlier could be understood in the light of cultural conditioning. I did grow up in an evangelical Christian home where belief in God and His word was a given, therefore you could argue that resulted in me being predisposed to this way of thinking and I agree. In my defense I made my own personal conscious decision to take that step of faith with no apparent sense of coercion from my parents, it came from a place of desire and longing within me. My memory as a child and into adolescence is not one of insistence of Christian dogma from my parents as in legalism (form of power play) but as I was growing up it was primarily the experience of God and the reality of the felt sense of His love that captured my heart, resulting from my parent’s faith in action. I acknowledge there is

a shadow side to Christianity in the form of abuse of power. Much has been done and sadly continues to be done in the name of Christ by those who claim to be Christians, which has not reflected the character and person of Christ, for whom there should be collective shame (as Christians) and I feel that shame. I ask however, does failure in this sense negate a belief in foundational knowledge and does culture and society solely dictate what we can know? How do we explain what I have termed 'heart' knowledge?

On entering the masters' course I was introduced to the concept of phronesis as advocated by Flyvbjerg (2001), a contemporary interpretation of the Aristotelian concept, translated as prudence or practical wisdom with a focus on value. Flyvbjerg sees social science as a value-laden discipline. He notes phronesis as the ability to contemplate rightly what is good and advantageous, where judgment and experience play an integral part – a sense of the ethically practical. Quoting Aristotle he defines it as: "a true state, reasoned and capable of action with regard to things that are good or bad for man" (p.2). I include my response to reading and thinking about this statement below from my BCR1 (2012) paper:

I am fascinated by this whole concept. As I contemplate the above statement my mind immediately goes to questioning what determines what is good or bad for man and on what basis can anything be true?

Where, I asked myself was the grounding of these concepts and ideas? On what basis is anything considered true or good or bad? How do we make value judgments? On reading over my notes in preparation for this section of writing I note I have written the following statement in my course notes on epistemology: "*It is the investigation of what distinguishes justified belief from opinion*". I then began to think about my Christian beliefs. Were they justified or were they mere opinions? How can one justify belief? Or can one? Is it as Freud maintained pure wish fulfillment? Or mere societal and cultural conditioning? Who or what then determines our values? I grew up with the belief that God was the source of all that is good and true. Were these mere assumptions, with no grounding or basis for belief - 'blind faith' as it were? I needed to explore, question and think through the basis for my confidence in my beliefs. The only measure (or evidence) I had to make sense of my belief in God and truth at this point was my own personal subjective experience of it – what I term 'heart' knowledge.

5.3. Evidence

My lived experience led me to an exploration of finding evidence for my belief system. I wrote on 21/8/14:

There began a process of searching for evidence for my faith. I had never questioned my belief in God and my sense of truth - was there any evidence to back it up (apart from my own subjective experience of it) I was learning about evidence based practice in C & P and saw and experienced the real value in that - especially in my practice with clients...

John McLeod (2001) writes of his desire for evidence-based practice in counselling and psychotherapy:

It is my belief that it is essential to develop a research tradition that is consistent with the practices and values of Counselling and Psychotherapy (p.8).

He notes that the establishment of person-centred theory by Carl Rogers in the 1950's came about through "extensive collaboration between clinicians, researchers, theoreticians who identified, defined, measured and tested the elements of client centred theory" (p.4). Rogers based his theory on evidential experience, which he had built up in his client work and research.

As I began my research for evidence I came across details of a conference entitled 'Confidence in the Truth' which was being held in Oxford and run by the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics. I attended the conference and came away energised with a renewed sense of confidence and a desire to explore further. There were a number of speakers at the conference all of whom were passionate about their subjects. Amy Orr-Ewing (2005) who has written a book called 'Why trust the Bible?' spoke about the reliability of the Bible based on historical scholastic evidence. John Lennox (2009, 2011), a professor of mathematics and philosopher at Oxford University spoke on the interface of science, philosophy and Christianity making a very good case for them being mutually compatible, arguing that natural science points to the existence of God. Tanya Walker, an apologist and lecturer at OCCA gave a personal testimony where she shared a concrete example of trust in God in her life - showcasing the value of personal testimony and experience.

Following on my learning and experience of that event, my own personal research continued and I want to share some of the salient points, which link my inquiry with Polanyi and elements of qualitative research.

1. God's self-revelation of Himself to humanity through the person of Jesus Christ and the significance of the historicity of Jesus and the evidence of his life, death and resurrection – the central tenets of the Christian faith. In the example of Jesus and His personhood and life recorded in the Biblical narrative I now see with fresh eyes the perfect example of what it means to be a person, encompassing mind, body and soul. I also see this as conferring ultimate worth on personhood, through being made in the image of God. Polanyi confers intrinsic universal value on personhood.

2. Archaeological findings – Modern archaeology supports the general veracity of the Bible's narratives. The sources exhibit verisimilitude where the Biblical narratives align with the historical data (Miles 2013). Verisimilitude is also a quality sought in social science research. The New Testament is full of eye witness accounts, proposing to document history, events that happened to real people, in real places at certain points in time. The finds have repeatedly confirmed what is written in the N.T. as in titles, names of rulers, time periods and landmarks. Archaeological evidence enlightens our understanding of the life and death of Jesus and the culture in which he lived. I associate this aspect of evidence to Polanyi and his theory of individual clues pointing to a bigger picture – seeking patterns and themes, allowing dots to be connected.

3. The construction and evidence for the Bible. I noted my sense of the Bible and its creation and personal significance in my BCR1 assignment after making a mental note from reading one of our handouts that the Bible was socially constructed:

I still believe in an all-powerful God who through His Holy Spirit is able to use and inspire fallible humanity to fulfill His good and eternal purposes. I have come to understand the formation of the Bible to have been socially constructed over approximately 1500 years by over forty authors. That all of the authors effectively point to the same redeeming message speaks volumes to me of its inspiration. The Bible continues to be a source of knowledge, wisdom, and incredible power in my life. 2 Timothy 3:16 says: "All Scripture is God breathed". I trust the efficacy of its worth as a result of my own personal lived experience and that of testimonies of countless people worldwide.

I had never considered though how it had come to be considered a canonical piece of literature. How did the New Testament come about? The material chosen had to meet certain criteria, they had to cohere and agree with undisputed Scripture and display a self-evidencing quality with the power to transform lives. Narratives, which met these criteria formed the

canon of the New Testament. Metzger (1965) writes “In the most basic sense, neither individuals nor councils created the canon, instead they came to preserve and acknowledge the self authenticating quality of these writings” (p.276). The canonical scriptures provide the basic narrative for how the church imagines the world and itself in the world (Loughlin 1999). It has an enduring quality and remains the best selling book of all time (Kostenberger 2014). As I write this I can’t help but relate this to how personal narrative research is validated, where the questions asked are “is it believable, true to life, does it appear credible?” Wall (2006) notes that when judging the scholarly value of personal narrative, one of the questions we can ask is “do we find it to be believable and evocative on the basis of our own experiences?” (p.156). How do we make that judgment?

Bartholomew & Goheen (2013) in their book on Christian philosophy note that an effect of faith is that we come to believe the Bible as God’s trustworthy word for all human life, a capacious narrative. They note the recognition of the importance and value of story in the scholarly world and argue that at a deep human level we all live out our lives in the context of a basic, foundational story, one that aims to tell the true story of the world. We indwell the truths it contains. I believe myself to be part of a much bigger story, that of God’s story. Again Polanyi and his sense of ‘indwelling’ comes to mind. If I believe God (revealed in the person of Jesus) to embody all that is true, then I believe His words to be true. Jesus said: “the words I speak to you, they are spirit, they are life” (John 6:63). This has been my experience, I believe them to be life giving with inherent meaning. So it doesn’t surprise me that when we write and speak, our words can also be creative and powerful, life giving. The reverse can also be true of course.

My engagement with the above process of investigating evidence for my Christian faith served to both confirm and deepen my confidence and belief in foundational truth leaving me with a growing sense there is always more to know and discover. I was able to identify the concept of ‘good enough’ as taught during my training. This phrase was coined by Winnicott (1960) and used in the context of the relationship between mother and child. The evidence I discovered for my belief system is ‘good enough’ for me to stand by it with assurance and confidence. I do not view my faith as ‘blind faith’ but rather what I now consider to be justified belief, based on ‘good enough’ evidence (both subjective and objective). Belief along with faith and trust are concepts, which are very much interrelated, but difficult to define. My sense of curiosity of these terms has led to further reflection. The more I read of Polanyi the more links I have made. His sense of belief correlates with the concept of faith and trust (1967, 1958).

5.4. Faith, Belief and Trust

My sense of the concept of belief and trust, stems from my Christian worldview and its interpretation of the concept of faith. In Hebrews 11:1 the writer was explaining this concept to recent Hebrew believers and wrote: “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see”. The Gospels detailed why the early Christians could be confident in their newfound faith. Paul, the apostle who had previously been systematically persecuting the Christians had had a personal spiritual encounter with the risen Christ and he bore witness to the reality of the resurrection. Faith has both a historical element (Jesus and His first coming to earth) and a future element (His second coming). The word translated as faith and belief in the New Testament is ‘pistis’ which encompasses a number of ideas, all revolving around an intentional engaged trust. Definitions of faith and belief include firm persuasion, assurance - conviction leading to confidence (Bullinger 1978). I can see how Polanyi’s theory of knowledge taps into this same concept of intentional engaged trust, a faith that seeks knowledge with confidence in finding it. He terms it the fiduciary element in our acts of knowing, a response to an intuitive belief in the rational order and patterning in life. Smith (2003) argues that “all human persons, no matter how well educated, how scientific, how knowledgeable, are at bottom believers” (p.54). This also ties in with Fowler’s premise of faith as a fundamental feature of human life and as an active way of knowing and seeing the world (1981).

I marvel at how often when I am trying to gain a deeper understanding of something my daily devotionals speak into my ponderings. I am reading through a programme of systematic reading called ‘The Bible in One Year’ at present, which involves reading a passage from the Old Testament, a passage from the New Testament and a section from the Psalms or Proverbs every day. Nicky Gumble, an ex lawyer and founder of Alpha (a course which offers people the opportunity to explore the meaning of life from a Christian perspective) writes a daily commentary. In my reading for today he relates a story of a Scottish man named John Paton who in the 19th century had travelled to the New Hebrides to translate the New Testament into the language of the islanders. He discovered there was no word in their language for trust, belief or faith and one day he raised both feet off the floor and sat back on his chair and asked one of the indigenous people “what am I doing now?” He responded with a word that meant ‘to lean your whole weight upon’ – the word encompassed the meaning beautifully (Paton 2009). This leads me to think about every day acts of faith.

My husband is a pilot and when he goes to work he can go with confidence that he will be able to fulfill his task, on the basis of a number of different elements, his own training, the knowledge that the aircraft will take off on the basis of past experience (historical fact), and aerodynamic performance. In this act of knowledge he also has to engage trust in himself and in others, both in his own learning and acquisition of the necessary skills, in the engineers who will have maintained the aircraft to the standards necessary for safe flight, the air traffic controllers who will ensure he gets clearance into clear air space and so it goes on. I as a passenger can also travel with confidence in the knowledge that the pilot is trained for the task and that the aircraft is worthy of flight. Trust does not work in isolation. There is of course always risk in trust as we cannot guarantee with certainty that all these elements are foolproof. Trust, by nature demands an element of risk. If foolproof evidence were possible, faith would no longer be a necessary element in any act of knowing. To act in faith however, one needs to have a certain confidence in what you're acting on.

There are two refrains which have stuck in my mind from my time on the diploma course, that of 'trusting the process' and the concept of 'good enough' which I have already alluded to. We were encouraged as fledgling trainees to 'trust the process' as we prepared to begin our counselling practice. Part of my reflection now is in taking a fresh look at what was entailed in that act of trust. Firstly there was teaching, our tutors taught us in the dialogue of person-centred and psychodynamic theories, and they had prior knowledge and personal experience of these theories. We were also introduced to literature, which we were encouraged to read and engage with and see and feel what resonated, which in turn added to our knowledge of the theories taught. We had access to clinical case studies, which could be used as evidence that the theories taught, worked in practice. A significant part of the course was experiential with the focus on feelings and on self and relational awareness. We also investigated our own backgrounds and individual stories with the emphasis on how the past (in all its varying forms) has shaped us, thus affecting the present. As we set out to begin our placements we were holding a wealth of knowledge and experience with the belief that it could work, we had to 'trust the process', an intentional act of faith. As we began to see the knowledge gained play out in practice, we developed confidence in the therapeutic encounter to effect change. The proof was in the pudding as it were and the more we experienced it working the greater our confidence became. The theoretical teaching formed the basis of the unfolding of the process that followed where trust was an integral part of that process – the enabling factor in counselling and psychotherapy.

This quality also plays a fundamental role in the therapeutic relationship and process. The client recognises there is a problem and intentionally acts on the belief and hope there might be a solution to the problem. In order for any healing to take place there needs to be an element of trust postured towards the therapist and his or her ability to engage authentically with the person and the problem. Trust allows the relationship to bond and develop, enabling a space for possible healing and growth to take place. There is a very clear link here with Polanyi where he understands faith (or trust) as the enabling factor in science.

A parallel process struck me in my experience of my belief system. I noted in my BCR1 paper:

My experience of learning to 'trust the process' both on the course and in counselling practice and reaping the benefits has served to enhance my trust in God and the outworking of my faith.

I now have a deeper understanding of 'How so?'

I am making further sense of this parallel as I write. I have been steeped in the Bible since my childhood. I see it as the ultimate guidebook containing the wisdom and theory for life in all its fullness. I have chosen to trust and believe the claims it makes on the basis of historical evidence and personal experience. I have devoted myself to its teaching and have experienced the promised end result, the joy and peace of knowing Jesus as my Saviour, through whom I am in relationship with my Father God. The more I trust the process as it were, the greater my confidence is. The process is transformational. The Biblical narrative is abounding with real life case studies, which I can learn from, identify with which add to my learning and experience. My own personal testimony and that of countless others, adds to that experiential and developmental process. Trust is an essential element in all of these processes and arguably an essential element in every day living. Fowler integrates this concept in his 'Stages of Faith' (1981) where he looks at patterns of trust and commitment that shape and sustain our lives, rendering faith as a human universal.

My exploration, assessment and evaluation of my interpretive framework has clarified my perception of faith, bringing meaning both personally and arguably at a fundamental theoretical level. When we trust something we have 'good enough' reasons to believe it, alongside 'good enough' evidence to justify and support it. We exercise faith or trust on the weight of the evidence or clues, where our capacity to reason is part of the process. There

must then surely be a correlation between faith and truth. I would argue along with Polanyi that faith and belief are related and work together where both reflect a conviction of truth or objective realities. With a fresh understanding of what belief entails I am back full circle and will conclude this section with my sense and belief that truth matters.

5.5. Truth Matters

I enclose an entry in my journal:

31/1/2016: Sticking Point - Woke up again this morning in the early hours thinking about ... Truth!! I can't get away from it! It feels like I am being pursued by it again... When looking for a book on Polanyi after my supervision class last week I fell across a book entitled "Truth Matters" in the philosophy section. As I leafed thro the book my sense of excitement was palpable - a current philosopher (with no explicit belief in Christianity) arguing for objective truth - amazing. I began reading the book as soon as I got home. Although my research inquiry is in and around integration of faith on a secular course - the sticking point for me has been my belief in foundational truth and my sense of objective truth. As a Christian the concept of truth is foundational to my life, my hope, my way of being and therefore for me truth matters! The author argues that it matters for everyone - I totally agree.

Lynch (2004), a professor in philosophy has written the book in question entitled 'True to Life, Why truth matters', a philosophical exploration and defense of why he believes that to be the case. He notes two extreme views, one where absolute certainty is paramount to a view of no truth at all. Relativism he sees as a self-refuting argument. This postmodern way of thinking he believes misrepresents what we mean by the word true. He believes we intuitively seek truth. He argues for a middle ground in line with Polanyi and writes: "We can acknowledge the frailty of the human condition and still go on pursuing truth" (p.29). He makes four claims concerning truth: that truth is objective, that it is good to believe what is true, that truth is a worthy goal of inquiry and that truth is worth caring about for its own sake. Lynch argues that caring about truth is deeply connected to happiness; our lives are more fulfilled when they are lived authentically and with integrity, where both concepts are connected to truth. These views connect with my sense and experience of truth.

I began this chapter by setting out my belief in foundational truth and my sense of truth as both personal and universal. I have identified with Polanyi and Schaeffer who believe that the subjective element in knowing does not remove the possibility of discovering objective truth revealing a fresh understanding for me. Polanyi champions truth but in the sense that we can

know in part where full and complete knowledge is not possible. I recognise the reality of social and cultural conditioning in our lives but question if this necessarily solely dictates what we can know. I explore my experience of seeking evidence for my Christian faith and examine the concept of trust, relating it to counselling and psychotherapy training and practice and to every day life. I note how faith is key and integral to Polanyi's theory of knowledge, the fiduciary element he argues. On the basis of my personal investigation into my faith and my belief in foundational truth I have come to an understanding that my belief is a reasonable one and one that is 'good enough', a process of personal authentication enabling a credible space to emerge both personally and theoretically. I finish by identifying with Lynch who argues that truth can be known and that truth matters. So as I continue to write my story I am writing with the premise that I believe one can know truly but not exhaustively. My story continues in the following two chapters with my exploration of two fundamental questions, which were ignited through my engagement with the teaching, literature and personal experience on the course. The questions will explore and develop my epistemological and ontological stance. The first question is "How can I know?" followed by "Who am I?"

Chapter 6: “How Can I Know?”

“Man is in his own ordinary way a very competent knower” (Campbell 1975 p.179)

In this chapter I reflect on my experience of an epiphany centered on a personal experience of resonance and identification with Lewis and his theory of knowledge as advocated by McGrath (2014) and my developmental thinking resulting from that moment. It was a moment of recognition of a personal heart and mind integration. I explore aspects of my experiential learning and my developing sense of ‘heart’ and ‘mind’ and how and where it relates to both Lewis and Polanyi.

6.1. C.S. Lewis and Personal Epiphany

I have written about my lived experience as an “integration of heart and mind” bringing with it a sense of release and joy and a feeling of ‘coming alive’. An epiphany moment took place as I listened to a YouTube video relating a model for knowing based on the thinking of Lewis. I was struggling at the time to find an epistemological framework to use for my research inquiry. I include an excerpt below from my research progress report (August 2014) reflecting on this moment:

Whilst listening to a YouTube lecture a few weeks ago on ‘Telling the truth according to CS Lewis’ delivered by Alister McGrath (a research scientist and professor of historical theology at Oxford University) I had an epiphany moment. As he spoke about the apologetic model Lewis used to argue his case for Christianity in his writings I had the feeling of it encapsulating beautifully my lived experience on the course – one of integration of heart and mind. I arrived on the course with a ‘heart (subjective) knowledge of God but as a result of my experience and questioning and learning and reflection I have connected with my ability to reason, confirming what I believe my heart to be telling me.

Lewis’ model is an appeal to both reason and intuition, a grasping of the reality of the created order, noting a fundamental theme of coherence. He uses rational argument alongside subjective experience, weaving together rational, aesthetic and moral threads to create a coherent whole. Lewis along with Polanyi suggest a resonance between intuition and reality. Polanyi notes that in research as in life in general we are guided by the urge to make contact with reality and when we do make contact there is a sense of resonance, an intuitive awareness of something or someone making sense, similar to an ‘aha’ moment. We feel this in our bodies. Polanyi writes of the affirmative functions of our bodily emotions (1958). The concept of resonance has been huge for me. What was I resonating with and how? As I

reflected on my response to the YouTube clip (referred to above) I was drawn to investigate Lewis and his writings further in order to see and understand my experience of integration better.

Lewis has been written about as one of the intellectual giants of the 20th Century. More than fifty years after his death he remains one of the most influential popular writers of our age (McGrath 2014). Lewis (an atheist for a significant part of his life) became fascinated by the ability of the Christian faith to make sense of life and bring meaning. He writes about how his imagination kept pulling him to a sense of transcendence. He identifies common human experience such as desire, human longing, our sense of morality and our sense of beauty linked with feelings of joy. Were these clues to a deeper meaning of life? Lewis observes that when we have these longings, yearnings, we are seeking union from something from which we are separated eg. a happy place, time or person. He argues these longings are clues pointing to the ultimate true object of our desire - ultimately God (Lewis 1955). Every intuitive desire Lewis argues points to there being a corresponding ultimate desire. My engagement with Lewis and his writing and way of thinking enabled me to make sense of what I was meaning when I spoke of 'heart' knowledge as well as a fresh understanding of how reason works.

6.2. Heart Knowledge – Felt Experience

As noted previously I came onto the course with what I considered as 'heart' knowledge of God. Lewis, in the model advocated by McGrath begins by arguing for subjective lived experience, shared human experience. He focuses on three elements of innate human experience and I will compare his thinking and processing with mine, linking with Polanyi where appropriate.

1. Desire – as in longing, striving for something, often undefined and seemingly unattainable, ineffable. Within this argument Lewis includes the elusive feeling of joy, one minute there, the next gone. He wanted to know what it meant and what way of seeing or interpreting his experience would help him make sense of it. On entering the masters' course I moved into the whole new world of philosophy, a completely new terrain for me. My sense of curiosity was awakened again, this time in the philosophical arena. I wrote in my BCR1 (December 2012) paper:

I am fascinated by the whole philosophical concept of 'knowledge' and what it means to know. What is it? How do we gain it? Where have I personally gained my sense of knowledge? In

terms of my faith I know in my heart that God loves me and that I love Him – how can I know that? I find it captivating. Whilst feeling totally out of my depth at the beginning of the Masters course, it has served to fire up within me a passion to investigate this topic more fully...

I have a desire to know. I believe this is a shared human experience. I hear the words “ I just don’t know” with ongoing regularity as I meet with my clients and I hear myself speak them too. They confer a sense of lament or regret in not knowing. We want to know. I would argue we are born to know. The passion to seek and develop knowledge comes from and is fueled by this intuitive desire as reflected by Lewis. In the same tone Polanyi writes about the passion we embody as humanity with an urge to seek out knowledge where there is an association with joy. Both Lewis and Polanyi identify feelings of joy inherent in the process of discovery. I noted earlier my feeling of ‘coming alive’ in my epiphany moment encompassing feelings of joy and wonder and ‘life’ within. It felt energising. I had the same feeling in my body when engaging with literature, taught theory and experientially when something resonated in my spirit. I felt ‘alive’. As noted previously according to Polanyi we are embodied creatures, we fully dwell in our bodies and are able to feel the conscious experience of our bodies. Polanyi’s theory of knowledge provides a way of understanding where there is a natural unity between knowing and being (1969). A second element of shared human experience, which Lewis writes about, is morality.

2. Morality - the feeling of moral obligation we all share, the sense of inherent respect we have for our fellow ‘other’. Polanyi writes of the essential unity of morality embedded within humanity and notes that man is the only creature in the world to whom respect is owed in this particular way. Lewis relates this to the law of the human heart, that of our conscience, suggesting a deeper order of things. I have a profound sense of this in my own life but it also resonates in my experience with my clients who, when their defense mechanisms are diminished, they know for themselves what is innately right and wrong. I have come to understand a sense of innate morality as an integral part of my ‘heart’ knowledge. I will explore this aspect more fully in Chapter 7. A third element of shared human experience as advocated by Lewis is that of beauty.

3. Beauty - the aesthetic and the visual. Lewis along with Polanyi see beauty as essentially intuitive and expressive (Lewis 1955, Polanyi 1958). Lewis viewed aesthetic experience as not merely pleasing but intrinsically valuable.

I am recognising that I am often most creative in my thinking when out walking and engaging with beauty. I regularly begin my journaling by writing 'when out walking'. I wrote the following excerpt after reflecting on Lewis and his sense of beauty and my own identification with it:

July 2014 Out walking and thinking about the power of beauty itself to speak – in some very real sense. I love the beauty of nature – a gift passed on to me by my mother. She pointed out beauty and I notice I do the same with my children. Beauty evokes delight and joy. CS Lewis writes about this sense of joy – the power and role of beauty. There are glimpses of feelings that tell us that there is something wonderful about life itself – moments of delight, out walking and finding pleasure in the smells, the beauty of a flower, the majesty of a tree, the blueness of the sky... how do we interpret such moments?

I see beauty in nature and in human nature and it inspires me, it brings me joy. My experience of integration has enhanced this sense in me. I love to walk and presently living in the Peebleshire countryside I am surrounded by beauty. Every day the vista changes and it feels like I breathe in the beauty and am much more acutely aware now of how it draws me to worship my creator God, leaving me with a sense of awe and wonder. My walks seem to ground me and refresh my spirit. I also remember a moment of pure joy when on holiday in Crete as I drew in the immense beauty of the twilight sky. It felt glorious. I wrote in my notes section on my iPhone as I reflected on a common refrain:

27/08/2015 "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder". Is that really the case or do we choose not to see it?

I have also observed this sense of connection with nature in my clients and how it so often seems to be a source of strength and inspiration to them. My growing sense of beauty is that it is an innate quality and when engaged with results in feelings of joy. There is of course the opposite reality; that of ugliness, reflecting the ugly and shadow side of life, resulting in sorrow and suffering as opposed to joy and wellbeing. Lewis also tapped into this reality in his writing. He took part in the Second World War but could not bear to remember the trauma of his war experience. In 'Surprised by Joy' (1955) he writes:

I put the war to one side...others will call it a flight from reality. I maintain it was a treaty with reality, the fixing of a frontier (p.183).

He spun a cocoon around himself insulating himself from the horror. This brings to mind a quote I read recently about Nietzsche (1975), which taps into this same sense of denial. He championed the death of God not because he believed it to be true but because he didn't want it to be true. He wrote:

But he had to die: he saw with eyes that saw everything; he saw man's depths and ultimate grounds, all his concealed disgrace and ugliness. His pity knew no shame: he crawled into my dirtiest nooks. This most curious, over obtrusive one had to die. He always saw me: on such a witness I wanted to have my revenge or not live myself. The god who saw everything, even man—this god had to die! Man cannot bear it that such a witness should live (p. 379)

As I engaged with Lewis and his experience of resistance I was taken back to my own experience of resistance during the psychodynamic course on the diploma. I am including this experience as it led to a further sense of integration as I was able to integrate both joy and pain. Feelings encompass both realities. I found some of the designated psychodynamic literature very difficult to engage with, in particular that of Melanie Klein and her psychodynamic theories. I found the terminology used, dealing with the shadow side of our psyche very dark and depressing and became aware that I often just wanted to sleep as I began to read. I had no desire to engage with it. As we approached the psychodynamic group process work I distinctly remember our tutor encouraging us as students to open ourselves to the psychodynamic theory and practice. I remember making a conscious decision that day to do just that.

The focus on memories at this point brought to my awareness my lack of early childhood memories. Below is an excerpt from some of my written reflective work during that time:

Dec 2011: From the psychodynamic point of view life is viewed as a difficult and challenging process and the therapeutic focus is on psychological or emotional pain (Leiper & Maltby 2004). When discussing my emotional involvement with my client with my supervisor at ThePlace2Be, she asked about my childhood. I casually mentioned having to leave home in Peru at the age of eight to go to an English school (my mother had taught me to that point) and live with a family I had never met. She noted the child I was working with was also eight years old and perhaps there was some identification going on there. She encouraged me to begin personal therapy. I was beginning to have a sense of curiosity but there was a part of me resistant to opening myself up to exploration of my early childhood...

June 2013: As I worked through my story I was able to see afresh how the past has shaped me. It allowed me to experience the Freudian concept of the power of the unconscious and

encounter the past being alive in the present in a very real and personal way (Leiper & Maltby 2004, Jacobs 2006). The process tapped into an unresolved issue from my childhood leading to a deep exploration of the impact of a painful childhood separation from my parents. This experience has been invaluable in my own personal growth and in my work with clients....

I began personal therapy during the psychodynamic phase of the diploma course and when relating the above experience my therapist encouraged me to think about how it might have felt for me as a little girl. I had no feelings attached with that experience. She drew attention to how I was holding myself (protective body language) and encouraged me to think about what I might be holding. As I allowed myself to reflect on this experience some time later I began to tentatively feel the impact of that separation. This feeling surfaced to a greater extent when reading, "Ghosts in the Nursery" (Fraiberg et al 1975) as I read two cases on loss and separation. There were words, which seemed to jump out at me and I sobbed like a child. I gave myself the permission to feel the pain of that separation and allowed myself to experience the tears I had suppressed for such a long time. At another point whilst reflecting on this experience I was able to retrieve a memory of standing beside my mother as we prepared to leave home. I had a sense of crippling fear. How was I going to manage? What was going to happen? We didn't really speak about painful experience in our family although at times I knew it to be there.

As a trainee counsellor I found it very difficult to sit with the pain my clients were bringing. My motherly instinct wanted to make it better and give assurance that it would all be ok. It felt a very uncomfortable place for me. I knew from my learning that facing the pain was a necessary part of the therapeutic process and my role was to create a safe space to enable that to happen. I had to access my internal supervisor and constantly remind myself to trust the process. With practice my struggle dissipated as I saw the resulting benefit in my clients. They would come 'holding' so much pain and the opportunity to voice it brought a sense of relief and release. I personally experienced that same sense of release when I got in touch with the pain I had suppressed as a child. Although I had a strong sense of personal faith and belief in God there was a disconnect in my way of being, often presenting itself through a felt sense of irrational fear.

I wrote two poems some time after the psychodynamic course, after watching the film 'Sunshine on Leith' and identifying again at one point in the film with a sense of deep pain felt in separation. The tears flowed again as I walked home. I cried many tears during my

training, both of joy and sorrow. It felt like an integration and acceptance of all aspects of my felt experiencing.

2.11.13 FEAR

Why so fearful I ask myself?

It has plagued me

Crippled me

Silenced me

I remember the day I left

All dressed in tartan

The long, silent journey

The unspoken pain

Looking out the window

Wondering, confused

Finally arriving

Strange family, strange place

I hated Marmite!

My first ever school

Where were you Mummy?

I loved you so and you loved me

So alone

Sick with typhoid fever

Feeling numb

And now the tears flow

Remembering the pain, deep pain

The fear, the loss, deep loss

Let the tears flow.

6.11.13 TEARS

So many tears

Tears of sorrow, of regret, of hurt,

Of love, of tenderness

Of joy

From deep within

The joys, the sorrows
Such misery in feeling
“Woe is me”
Such joy in feeling
“So blessed am I”
My heart explodes with both
I can’t hold it in

I want to howl and scream
I want to shout and sing
I want to tell the world
‘Life aches’, ‘Life sings’
What a life!
I am alive, the wonder of it all
What a gift!

As I reflect on these poems I am recognising how the training space with its focus on developing self awareness through openness to experience and focus on feelings gave me the space and freedom to embrace both painful and joyful feelings, allowing for integration of these parts leading to a more congruent sense of self. Sala (2009) in his book ‘Making your emotions work for you’ notes that self knowledge is crucial to a deep understanding of life where the greatest struggles in life are fought in the human heart. He believes emotions are God’s design for us to help us process experience but should not control our lives. Sala writes that when we choose to let our emotions control our behavior, we have as an act of our will, decided to bypass our intellect (our reason). Feelings are powerful, divorced from logic or reason they can take us to places of deep despair or conversely they can motivate us to altruistic heights never thought possible. I noted at the beginning of this chapter my sense of heart knowledge of God, I knew it to be true in my heart. My epiphany moment was the beginning of a process, which has led to a deeper understanding of integration. I have come to realise that my feelings, although a significant part of my being and experience don’t stand-alone. Feelings (as part of tacit knowledge) are merely clues, which point to a bigger picture. Discovery and integration require more than pure sensory experience. Polanyi drew on Gestalt psychology to make sense of the logic behind tacit powers – where perception is understood to be a comprehension of clues, which point to hidden realities; the grasping of disjointed parts into a comprehensive whole. Polanyi writes:

When we recognise a whole, we see its parts differently from the way we see them in isolation (1969 p.138)

Feelings when linked to my ability to reason and my interpretive framework take on new meaning and perspective.

6.3. Mind Knowledge - Reason and Reflexivity

My engagement with Lewis and Polanyi has given me a fresh understanding of reason and logic (another tacit dimension) and how they work together to help make sense of experience and gain understanding. My exploration of my epiphany moment has served to gain further insight into this particular human quality. My capacity to reason has been honed during my training, as I have been encouraged to question, be curious and reflect on what I'm learning and experiencing. The pursuit of science as Polanyi noted is motivated by a personal passion to understand and this passion activates our mental life – our minds, our intellectual capacity. He affirms this particular capacity when he writes; “man’s capacity to think is his most outstanding attribute” (1969 p.11). Social science is both personal and interpretive. In order to gain understanding our experience needs to be interpreted. Christianity gave Lewis the intellectual framework that both interprets the experience as well as giving it ultimate meaning. Lewis along with Polanyi engaged reason alongside intuition in their pursuit of knowledge whilst acknowledging the need for frameworks to work within (1958). Polanyi advocates that all acts of knowing exercise “a personal judgment in relating evidence to an external reality” (1967 p.25). As noted earlier my epiphany moment came as I identified with Lewis and his interpretation and understanding of his lived experience, where Christianity became his interpretive framework: using both his felt sense (heart and imagination) and his intellectual ability to reason (his mind). Jesus affirmed the importance of the life of both the heart and the mind. In response to being asked by the Pharisees (the religious leaders of the day), which was the greatest commandment in the Law, he said: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37). In the New Testament writings, there is a large focus on the transformation of the mind as being key to wholesome living. Any form of belief requires our intellect and capacity to reason. It is also the faculty, which involves our ability to make judgments and allows for recognition of contradiction.

Lewis identified with the Greek philosophical idea of a ‘first principle’, that of a sense of order or patterning embedded within the universe, where human reason allows it to be seen. Lewis (1955) notes our logic as “a participation in a cosmic logos” (p.243) leading to a vision of reality that could weave together rational, moral, and aesthetic threads into a more coherent

and meaningful whole. The etymology of the word logic stems from the Greek word *logos* meaning word or reason. The Bible refers to Christ as the 'logos' (the word), the personal word as intelligible and rational, the word that created a knowable world, peopled by creatures who can know. Bartholomew & Goheen (2013) note that in Greek philosophy the word 'logos' was used to refer to the rational principle of the universe. Reason directly apprehends the eternal forms of the ideal world, ideas and forms that have objective reality such as goodness, beauty, truth and justice. The essence of humanity they argue can only be grasped by reason. Polanyi also recognised this inherent sense of order or patterning, which he experienced as a scientist, and further developed it in his theory of personal knowledge. The fiduciary element in his theory of knowledge stemmed from this innate desire to seek and find order and coherence in nature and in life.

Polkinghorne (1998) in his book 'Belief in God in an age of Science' writes that the fundamental content of belief in God is that there is a mind and a purpose behind the history of the universe. One of the ways he believes God reveals Himself to us is through our minds, "the thinking reed of humanity". Our minds appear to have ready access to the deep structure of the universe. Nature is characterised by a wonderful sense of order and our minds are able to comprehend it and see it. He writes, "we live in a world whose physical fabric is endowed with transparent rational beauty" (p.2) where the rational beauty of the cosmos reflects the mind that holds it in being.

My engagement with reason has led me to think about reflection and how they are related. As a Christian, personal reflection has always been a big part of my way of being. My guidebook in life, the Bible, encourages me to examine my life in the light of God's word and to reflect on its meaning and significance, both for myself, my fellow human and our interaction together. Schaeffer (1990) notes the Bible as an adequate basis for the unity of knowledge, encompassing the whole story of life. There is an element of teaching or instruction that is integral to life and learning. Polanyi also notes the value of guidebooks in learning how to live. By the time I entered the course I had already developed a reflective process through my spiritual discipline practice. This same process was developed further as I engaged with the literature prescribed on the course as well as the experiential element, reflecting on it in the light of my Christian faith, finding resonance or otherwise and coming to a fresh understanding. I wrote the following in one of my assignments on the diploma:

Brian Thorne (Mearns & Thorne 2007) writes about developing a spiritual discipline in his life, which he feels has a positive bearing on his therapeutic relationships. As a child I

experienced this type of discipline in our home and it has had a huge impact on my life. The Bible was read every day and my parents prayed for me and with me daily. It all felt very 'real'. I made my own personal commitment to the Christian faith when I was ten years old and it is as a result of this that my spiritual discipline has developed over the years. This time spent in 'communion' with God as I read and meditate and spend time in prayer has become a very precious time for me and is a sustaining force in my life and becoming increasingly so. I now know it to be 'real' for myself.

As part of my spiritual discipline, for many years, I used the writings of Selwyn Hughes, in the form of a booklet called 'Every day with Jesus' to help stimulate my thinking. He pioneered a movement of Christian counselling in the UK and set up an organisation called the Crusade for World Revival (CWR). A key element in his thinking resonated with me during this time and my ongoing life experience and learning on the course has confirmed it further. He noted the very real connection between our thoughts, our feelings and our behavior. How we think affects how we feel and subsequently how we act. Schaeffer also perceived the primacy of reason in each individual's makeup and the potency of ideas in the human mind. He confirms the sense that "ideas have legs", how we think affects how we act. There are of course, as in all areas of life, exceptions to every rule; this principle is normative but not foolproof. When a concept or a theory resonates in my spirit I have come to understand it as a resonance with my fundamental belief system, there is an echo of something deeper. It concurs with my sense of reality. A pivotal moment in my journey of discovery, as noted earlier under 'epiphany', was my sense of connecting heart and mind, where my newly honed thought and reflective processes were making sense of my heart experience. A deep resonance occurred in which the process of integration has brought a much deeper sense of harmony to my whole being. Moreland & Craig (2003) argue philosophy is essential for the task of integration where the various parts of one's life and being form into a whole, leading to a more harmonious, un-fragmented self.

Moreland and Craig also note philosophy as foundational to every discipline of the University where philosophy is defined as a worldview, the theory or attitude that acts as a guiding principle. They argue that philosophy cannot be theologically neutral. Each discipline will hold certain presuppositions and these will be either disposed towards or disposed against orthodox Christian theism. I would tend to agree. My experience and sense of the secular postmodern academic worldview is that it is rooted in skepticism, where doubt is paramount. As noted previously the natural ultimate outworking of this stance is nihilism where life has no intrinsic value or purpose. My worldview is based on a firm belief in a one true God who

embodies all that is good and true. The natural outworking of this belief is that life in all its forms has intrinsic value and therefore has ultimate meaning. One worldview focuses on belief and the other focuses on doubt. Is there a place for a middle ground? Polanyi recognises and accepts limitations to our knowing but rejects skepticism in the sense of doubt removing the ultimate belief that objective knowledge is possible (1958).

Bartholomew & Goheen (2013) note the formation of the University as having been a Christian invention in the Middle Ages, but one, which has become secular in line with cultural developments. Historically Christianity created a climate of thought, which made science possible. The early scientists believed there was a God who created a reasonable universe, and humanity by nature of his or her capacity to reason could discover truth. They expected to find order in the universe. Albert Einstein once said: "The only incomprehensible thing about the universe is that it is comprehensible" (cited in Lennox 2011 p.52). It appears to me that modernism and postmodernism ideologies have shifted from one extreme to the other, leaving a gap in the middle. Groothuis (2004), a professor of philosophy, believes the error of modernism was in creating a false totality based on autonomous reasoning, which excluded divine revelation, and the error of postmodernism is the abandonment of metanarrative, embracing of relativism and the endorsement of cultural constructivism. Schaeffer also writes about an epistemological gap that exists, brought about by the change in the concept of truth. He believes humanity needs to recover his or her rationality (ability to reason) but renounce rationalism (the theory of knowledge which assumes we can know with total objectivity). I agree with Schaeffer. Polanyi's theory of personal knowledge also points to an epistemological gap. He believes truth (as equated to knowledge) exists and can be discovered through active, personal and responsible engagement. He formulated an epistemology that argued for a knower actively integrating clues to understand and make knowledge, where our capacity to reason allows the integration to take place.

Moving onto reflexivity. I have struggled somewhat with this concept during my training. Reflexivity is understood to mean the process of questioning our assumptions and presuppositions to enable a deeper understanding of why and how we think and act in the way we do. This prevalent concept in social science literature, an essential aspect of counselling and psychotherapy, and one which, plays a significant role in social science research, requires the capacity to reason. Mason (2002) writes of the process as "thinking critically about what you are doing and why, confronting and often challenging your own assumptions and recognising the extent to which your thoughts, actions and decisions shape your research and what you see" (p.5). I was compelled to confront and challenge my assumptions and have

become increasingly aware of how they have shaped my research and what I see. My process however doesn't stop there. It goes on to ask, "On what basis are we questioning our assumptions and presuppositions?" "How do we evaluate the outcome of that process?"

Mezirow (1990) writes of critical reflection as challenging the validity of presuppositions, reassessing our own orientation to perceiving, knowing, believing, feeling and acting. He identifies the central function of reflection as that of validating what is known. On what basis I ask myself is anything validated? My belief in foundational truth has given me a basis to work from. My reflexive process has allowed me to investigate my faith and explore empirical evidence for my firmly held beliefs. My capacity to reason has allowed me to form and make the necessary judgments in formulating my conclusions.

As I conclude this section on "how can I know?" I am reflecting on notes I had written when reading Bartholomew & Goheen (2013), which would seem to resonate with my experience of heart and mind integration. The authors note the influence of Plato and Aristotle in Christian philosophy. The church fathers integrated Plato's thinking and it has consequently permeated Christian tradition. Plato understood the world in terms of an ontological and cosmological dualism. The world was made up of both the invisible and eternal world of ideas (that can be grasped by reason) and the visible and temporal world of matter (that can be known by sense perception). He believed our sense perception not to be as reliable as our rational capacity. Our capacity to reason allows us to see a bigger picture. There is a correlation between Lewis' thinking and that of Polanyi who developed his theory of personal knowledge in the hope it would restore a sense of fundamental meaning in people's lives. He sought to bring together natural and social science into existential harmony through the recognition of meaningful order in the world by bringing into focus the personal participation of the knower in all acts of knowing. He advocated a fusion of both personal (subjective) and external (objective) elements where "the personal and the universal mutually require each other" (1958 p.308). The subjective element, taking into account the evidence of our senses, feelings and immediate experience (clues) and the objective element taking into account theoretical and external knowledge.

Polanyi notes how we as persons actively identify and integrate clues, which in turn point to something bigger resulting from a belief "in the presence of an external reality with which we can establish contact" (1969 p.133). He believed all knowledge displayed a dual structure, that of explicit and implicit, external and internal, visible and invisible, objective and subjective. I'm wondering if the postmodern focus on the particular, the subjective and the

preeminence of doubt is inhibiting this innate human quality. The sole focus on the particular removes the capacity to see a bigger picture. As I write I am reminded of a verse in the Psalms, which has been an anchor for me and has taken on a deeper meaning since coming to live in the countryside. The psalmist writes: “I lift my eyes up to the hills, where does my help come from? My help comes from the Maker of heaven and earth” (Psalm 121:1). I am surrounded by the rolling Pentland hills and when out walking I am drawn to look up at the hills, it draws me outwards and upwards, out of myself and connects me to my Maker. I believe God to be both within and without where my capacity to feel alongside my capacity to reason makes sense of both these realities. Polanyi notes integration (making sense of experience) as both a sensory experience as well as a semantic one. My epiphany experience concurs.

In this chapter I relate my experience of heart and mind integration in the light of both Lewis and Polanyi in order to gain a deeper understanding of my epistemological query. I note the links between their thinking and my own. They both acknowledge the value of personal participation in acts of knowing, where the knower is an active agent in the process, seeking to integrate patterns and clues in the belief that true discovery is possible. They both acknowledge the need for frameworks to work within, noting a fusion of both subjective and objective elements in any process of discovery. They note our capacity to reason as the enabler for both reflection and integration. I also dialogue with other authors who add to the discussion. My exploration of my experience of integration has clarified my understanding of ‘heart’ knowledge, encompassing both aesthetic intuition and morality, tapping into the tacit elements espoused by Polanyi. It has also served to clarify and further my understanding of my human capacity to reason. My exploration of my personal experience of heart and mind integration sitting alongside Polanyi and his theory of personal knowledge has led me to believe there is the possibility of a middle ground between modernism and postmodernism, one that draws together and integrates significant aspects of both, that of personal subjective experience alongside rational thought. I argue we are creative, emotional, moral and rational beings. In the following chapter I develop my sense of further innate qualities we possess as humanity, which I link to the fundamental values in counselling and psychotherapy.

Chapter 7: “Who am I?” “Who are We?”

In this chapter I will engage with the above question and my developing understanding of the concept of Imago Dei as I relate it to my experience and the theories and values taught in counselling and psychotherapy. I will discuss the fundamental concept of inherent value, my sense of morality, the primacy and significance of relationship, the concept of love and conclude with a discussion on spirituality.

I remember distinctly our discussion around this question at the outset of my training on the certificate course as we engaged with the ‘Big Questions’. We were given a list of ‘Some Big Questions’ and in answer to the first question of ‘Who am I?’ I noted (Sept/Oct 2009):

A unique living being with a mind, a body, a soul, created by God and in His image with an inherent need for love and relationship and my purpose for being is to love God, others and myself

The second question was: “Am I fixed or fluid, static or changing?” and my answer to that was: *very much fluid... but the fundamental core of who I am doesn’t change.*

Much later into my training I had to present at the research conference entitled “Who do we think we are?” where I began by responding to my own question of “Who do I think I am?” by saying:

May 2013 I am a human being, a woman, a wife, a mother, a sibling, a friend, a colleague, a student, a volunteer counsellor. These are all true and part and parcel of my ‘configurations of self’, but do they really define who I am at the core of my being/ my personhood/ the essence of who I am?

Rogers (1967) writes that the underlying question in all of us is “Who am I really?” He used the phrase “To be that self one truly is” coined by Kierkegaard, a Danish philosopher who saw this as the deepest responsibility of man. The enterprise of seeking answers to such questions is never straightforward because as Meek (2003) notes, “we rely on every act of knowing on foundational philosophical beliefs” (p.11) and these differ from person to person as already discussed. I became curious about the concept of human value and inherent worth, one of the fundamental values and principles in counselling and psychotherapy, both in theory and in practice.

7.1. Inherent Value

Thorne (2002) writes about this aspect of our humanity (our intrinsic worth) in ‘The Mystical power of Person-Centred Therapy’. He refers to:

an unshakeable belief in the unique value of the human person and essential wonder of the human race... to live out such a belief demands not arrogance but the humility to accept the truth about the essential core of one’s being (p.24).

Thorne notes the transformational effect of a human life being validated in that it confers worth and meaning to personhood. Transformation, he argues can only take place when one has faith or belief in the core value of the intrinsic worth of the human person, including oneself. I am aware again of the role of faith and belief noted above. Thorne uses words such as intrinsic and essential as he writes of this concept conferring both personal and universal value to it. I wrote in a piece of academic writing in June 2013:

All of my clients have had issues of ‘self worth’ – they have felt unloved, unwanted, uncared for, abandoned, rejected, controlled, powerless or judged leaving them with a warped sense of ‘self’ causing conflict in their experiencing of ‘self’ leading to maladaptive behavior (Rogers 1980). As they have entered into the therapeutic relationship and opened themselves up to the process they begin to experience a new way of being and relating. As they begin to feel accepted and ‘loved’ they begin to see themselves in a different light and are able to connect with the ‘real’ self.

A frequent annotation on my writing for my thesis from my supervisor around statements that have no basis or backing is “how so?” This has been a recurring question throughout my training as noted previously. I held this same question in and around the concept of human worth, “how so?” “On what basis is a person of value?” “Where does our value come from?” “Why is that sense of being valued so significant and so powerful?” The need to feel of value or have a sense of worth would appear to be a universal need and one that transcends cultural boundaries. “How so?”

As I began the certificate, part of my spiritual discipline at the time was reading daily reflections by John Stott, a prolific Christian writer and preacher, entitled ‘Through the Bible, Through the Year’. The focus on week 1 (September) was on creation. Stott notes the creation of humanity as the pinnacle of God’s creative activity, where humanity is described in Genesis as having been created “in the image of God” (Genesis 1:27) and God saw that it was “very good”, the supreme creation of a personal God. I was aware of the concept of Imago

Dei but had never given it much thought as to what it actually might mean or look like. Stott noted a number of human qualities or capacities that render us like God. Stott (2006) writes:

Firstly we human beings are rational and self-conscious. Secondly, we are moral, having a conscience that urges us to do what we perceive to be right. Thirdly we are creative like our creator, able to appreciate what is beautiful to the ear and to the eye. Fourthly we are social, able to establish with one another authentic relationships of love. For God is love, and by making us in His own image, He has given us the capacity to love Him and others. Fifthly, we have a spiritual faculty that makes us hunger after God. Thus we are uniquely able to think, to choose, to create, to love and to worship. (p.18)

I have been drawn back to this specific reading as I consider this concept further. It resonates and helps to make sense of how I view my own sense of worth. Stott argues that the sanctity of human life arises from the value placed on us as being made in the image and likeness of God. In Christianity the essence of each and every person and the individual reality of each life is sacred. Stott writes we are “Godlike beings”, deserving of love and service. Such a view gives us worth, dignity, and hope. Lewis (1941) maintains a similar view when he writes about there being ‘no ordinary people’. Religious narratives are deeply embedded in our Western culture and traditions. The Christian narrative has played a big role in the formation of our society and fundamental societal values. Orr Ewing argues that the concept of the dignity and worth of the human person, expounded in the Magna Carta (a charter of liberty and political rights) evolved from our Christian heritage and is based on the assumption of the existence of God³. Browning (2011), a professor of ethics and the social sciences, advocates that Christian heritage is in our bones, even the bones of the unbeliever. He writes, “we cannot understand ourselves unless we understand what historical forces have shaped us and Christianity is certainly one of those central influences” (p.674). This connection has been made explicit in the world of counselling and psychotherapy at Edinburgh University as already explored in chapter 4.

As I have engaged with my data resulting from my experience of engaging with the taught theory in the light of my Christian worldview I have noted emerging themes as I sought connection within both disciplines. The themes are in and around aspects of our being, which are deemed innate, hardwired, inherent or intrinsic. As I began to explore these themes more fully I was able to see how they are encompassed in Stott’s thinking and writing above. The five human qualities advocated by Stott in relation to being made in the image of God (that of our rational, creative, moral, relational and spiritual aspects of our being) are serving to focus my thinking in relation to answering the question of ‘Who am I?’ The rational and creative elements of self have been explored already through the process of my investigation of heart

³ (https://issuu.com/rzim_europe/docs/pulsemag_issue11)

and mind integration, in the previous chapter. I will now explore the three remaining qualities, that of our moral, social and spiritual aspects of self.

7.2. Morality

On engaging with my notes I had made reference to Taylor (1989) whose writing was referenced in our training literature. In his book 'Sources of the self' he makes a link to the concept of 'the good' as 'morality', which he believes to be instinctual and inherent. He associates it with that of respect for life, integrity, wellbeing and flourishing. He says: "we are dealing with moral intuitions that are deep, powerful and universal" (p.4), a given ontology of the human being. A more contemporary author who makes a similar connection is Sack (2003). He makes a connection between reality, goodness and morality in his book 'A geographical guide to the Real and the Good'. He notes that our ideas about what we think as 'good' embody a sense of morality, they undergird our moral evaluations and consequently our actions. He believes this sense of 'good' to be intrinsic; we as humans have a natural compulsion to transform the world. He also notes the significant link between morality and free will. To be a moral agent one must be able to choose and possess some degree of autonomy. He acknowledges that much of our behavior is conditioned but in order for us to be moral agents there must be a degree of an innate moral compass, otherwise if our choices are purely caused by pre-existing conditions we cannot be responsible for our actions. Sacks notes reality as compelling, it arouses our curiosity, drawing us outward. It feels like something ultimately beyond our grasp, encompassing a transcendent element. His line of thinking totally resonates with mine but my question of "how so?" remains. The sense of when we tap into the 'good' we access the 'real' confirms my sense of connecting with God who embodies all that is good and true, as in ultimate reality. Polanyi believes in research as in day-to-day life we are guided by the urge to make contact with reality. We embody the real (Meek 2003).

From a Christian perspective morality is grounded in the person and character of God, not culture. Lewis (1952) notes a shared intuition with respect to the matter of right and wrong and terms it the law of human nature, a moral law within, peculiar to our universal humanness or personhood. Scripture affirms that all people (both Jews and Gentiles) hold this law in common, as "written on their hearts" (Romans 2:15). This helps me understand my sense of this being an innate quality and one, which is integral to 'heart' knowledge, a fundamental aspect of tacit knowledge. Morality presupposes elemental principles of right and wrong, which feeds into the duality of human nature.

7.3. True self False Self

A curiosity around my observation of what I am terming the dual nature of humanity developed as I became more fully aware of the paradox of both positive and negative innate aspects in myself and in others, resulting from my experience and learning on the diploma. In the person-centred approach the emphasis is on the essential goodness of humanity often termed the 'true' self. Rogers noted the ultimate goal in therapy was to find the 'true' self. I fell in love with this approach as noted in the excerpt below taken from my presentation given at the end of the diploma training entitled, 'coming alive':

May 2012 I fell in love with the whole concept. I am a firm believer in the transforming power of 'love' in relationship and the concept of 'healing' in and through the therapeutic relationship resonates with me. I fully embrace the core conditions – a 'way of being' which was played out perfectly in the life of Jesus while on earth. As I see it He is the embodiment of the "fully functioning" person as taught by Rogers. This approach for me signifies 'Life' and 'Light' and parallels at a very human level the 'love of God'.

Winnicott (1971), an object relations theorist linked the true self with the idea of feeling real, alive, existing, recognising an innate authenticity. When we speak of an act of humanity we refer to something, which is inherently 'good' and wholesome, as in acts of kindness or benevolence often displayed after natural disasters, where there is no ulterior motive, reflected in pure generosity from the heart. I recall being aware of this aspect as people responded to both tsunamis in Asia. I also distinctly remember a conversation with a friend directly after the tsunami in Thailand a number of years ago. She recalled her son's reaction to her questioning of God in this event. His response to his mother was: "God is in the giving" and that has remained with me, it rings true; an intuitive response.

Where I part company with the person-centred approach is with its emphasis on the fully autonomous self and the belief that human distress is solely attributable to external forces, removing any sense of personal accountability or responsibility towards others. As part of my personal development project (required for the doctorate) I wrote about my experience of a Bible study course which I took part in during the summer break from University after my decision to transfer from my masters' programme to that of the professional doctorate. I related the 5-step process of the study to the parallel therapeutic process as described by Rogers (1957) where he details the necessary and sufficient conditions for therapeutic change to occur. Under condition 2 - 'client in a state of incongruence' - where there is tension between the 'self' as perceived and the actual experience, a sense of dissonance, I wrote:

I was in a state of 'unease' as I began this study. My experience of the diploma training had been positively life changing but there were parts of my developing self I was uncomfortable with. Life had become all about 'me' (in particular in my relationship with my husband). I had adopted an aggressive and critical spirit towards him. It was tearing us apart.

The theme for the first week of the study was on the tongue and the power of words, in my personal life, my family and in my relationship with God. The words spoke gently of Him “desiring truth in my inner parts” and it was not pleasant as I faced the reality of my own heart.... I was very aware of a blockage in my own experience but was resisting the need to face it and put it right. It felt like heart surgery, painful but ultimately restorative through confession and forgiveness.

The source of this blockage for me was not there as a result of external conditioning from society or the past, the problem was with my heart and my attitude towards my husband. It was wholly mine and I needed to take responsibility for what I had allowed to take place in my heart. I had allowed the intense focus on ‘me’ and ‘myself’ and ‘autonomy’ to take hold. I have included this personal experience to show how I believe conscience can work. Sometimes the only thing that accounts for my sense of dissonance or unease is my innate conscience. Holdstock (2011) argues for the need of a paradigm shift in the person-centred approach and notes that the focus on the individual as an autonomous entity has not alleviated the globally growing mental health crisis. He calls for a new paradigm where there is room for an interdependent model of self that transcends cultural boundaries.

The Psychodynamic theory focuses on the opposite reality of our human nature, the dark or fallen nature, often termed the ‘false self’. Freud, the father of psychoanalysis believed that there was a destructive element to humanity. His most important contribution to psychodynamic thought was his recognition of the importance of unconscious processes in human development and behavior, where the past is dynamically alive in the present. Klein, Fairbairn and Winnicott further developed his theories into what became known as the object relations school (Gomez 1997). Winnicott (1965) used the term the ‘false self’ to relate to an artificial persona and way of relating with others arising from unmet dependency needs in infancy and childhood. He notes this sense of self as lacking the essential element of creative originality, an innate characteristic of infancy. This lack or absence of nurture can lead to maladaptive behavior and a sense of deadness.

I remember being struck and moved by one of our tutors recognising his own sense of humanity in the sense of “I’m only human”, in response to input from one of my student peers. In Webster’s dictionary the word ‘human’ is an adjective for imperfection. I also remember noting that when drawing up a contract for the group process work, forgiveness made its way onto the list. We all recognise we are not perfect beings. How do I know I am an imperfect being without a standard of perfection? As I reflect on this I can only understand myself in the light of a perfection that goes beyond my powers. The New Testament designates Jesus as the perfect man, a visual example and testimony of a perfect life lived in perfect relationship with His Heavenly Father. I believe there are true moral absolutes, grounded in God’s perfect nature. My understanding and Christian belief is that, as a result of the Fall recorded in Genesis where Adam and Eve chose to doubt God and the truth of His word, we as a human race have inherited that fallen nature and therefore the original perfect image has been defaced but not destroyed. The Christian view suggests that, "our good impulses and our bad impulses, our love for and rebellion against God, are both representative of our true (fallen) selves" (Jones & Butman 2011 p.275). This view coheres with and encompasses aspects of both person-centred and psychodynamic theories making integration possible, confirming my sense of reality. This duality brings with it tension.

7.3.1. Tension

It follows that as a result of this duality, some experience of inner conflict is part of what it means to be human. Schaeffer (1990) and his sense of what it means to be ‘normal’ has intrigued me adding to my perspective of this phenomenon. His idea taps into the sense of yearning for a better world as reflecting a yearning for our original true perfect self, which also ties in with Lewis and his thinking. He writes that the Fall as recorded in Genesis resulted in humanity’s separation from God, other and self. He notes that at the beginning of time humanity was ‘normal’, but is now ‘abnormal’. As beings who are a reflection of God, he argues that when we refuse to believe in Him we are living against the revelation of ourselves, living in a reality with no adequate explanation. When we eliminate God we diminish ourselves in denying a part of ourselves, we become God and in the process destroy our own humanity. God did not make man cruel therefore he didn’t make the results of man’s cruelty. Pain and suffering are an abnormal way of being, contrary to God’s original plan. I agree with Schaeffer, however, I also believe ‘normal’ in the here and now to encompass both aspects of our humanity. This tension will remain I believe until Jesus returns to restore all things. I find that often when my clients are able to recognise and accept both realities in their lives there is a sense of release. Polanyi notes a similar tension when he writes, “we live in the tension between what we are and what we seek” (1969 p.v).

I argue we are essentially moral beings – we know intuitively right from wrong. Human conscience, alongside respect for the ‘other’ is a crucial aspect of our humanity. I argue this is a universal phenomena and one, which transcends situational ethics. We all expect to be treated with respect and dignity and experience an intuitive response or reaction when this is not the case. Polanyi (1967) writes, “ at the highest level of personhood we meet man’s moral sense” (p.51), an essential aspect of mankind where only human action is subject to moral judgment. Linked to this inherent quality is the concept of free will and human autonomy or agency, also part of the very nature of what it means to be human, granting us the ability to choose how we think and act and ultimately determining the people we become. I believe the concept of individual autonomy is about the ability and freedom to choose and is therefore linked to personal responsibility, an integral part of Polanyi’s theory of knowledge. He writes: “The moment we recognise a human being, we attribute to him a measure of active, responsible intelligence” (1969 p.135). Thomas Aquinas, a pioneer of human liberty, referred to our conscience as the light within us (cited in Novak 1998). Novak notes that with frequent failures to use it, deliberate abuse of it, we can dim this light and all but extinguish it. We can also deceive it, as Lewis noted in the Screwtape letters (1953). I wrote these jumbled thoughts in my notebook at the side of my bed as I woke up recently:

Dec. 2016 Intuition/inherent knowledge

Hardwired – to know, to love, to respect, to belong...

Fundamental needs – to love, to belong, to know

There are some things we just know – right and wrong, good and bad.

Sexual abuse (very topical just now) – we know instinctively that its wrong – we see the deep damage in our clients - and yet that same act experienced in a relationship bound by love and commitment is a profound and beautiful thing?? In a consensual act it can also be nothing more than a physical act of sensual momentary pleasure?? How does this all add up?

This takes me onto the social aspect of self, encompassing our fundamental need to be in relationship, to love and be loved.

7.4. Primacy of Relationship and the Theme of Love

Psychological theory now holds as a guiding principle that humans are inherently relational and oriented from birth to experience themselves as persons in relation (McDargh 2001). I was fascinated by some of the neuroscience research I was introduced to as a student on the diploma course. Neuroscientists are discovering that a particular cluster of our neurons are

specifically designed and primed to mirror another's bodily responses and emotions. We are born to resonate with each other at the deepest emotional levels (Rothschild 2007). Schore (2001) writes about the necessity for the right brain (encompassing feelings and emotions) and the left brain (encompassing the thinking, cognitive part of the brain) to come together to be able to tell a coherent story, mind and heart making sense of each other. This is helping to make further sense of resonance as I write as well as deepening my understanding of my epiphany moment. At birth the brain is not fully developed, it does so through connection with others and the quality of that connection is vital for healthy relationships in later life. Gerhardt in her book 'Why love Matters' (2004), argues that the basic need for love is evidenced at the very onset of life. There is now scientific evidence with respect to the formation of the brain being dependent on a healthy loving relationship. Gerhardt writes about how affection shapes a baby's brain. The orbitofrontal cortex (the controller for the right brain) develops almost entirely postnatally and is dependent on social interaction during this time.

This sense of hardwiring is backed up by many of the theories in counselling and psychotherapy where the primacy of relationship is a dominant theme. It is a key feature in both person-centred and psychodynamic approaches where the therapeutic relationship is the principle vehicle of change. Rogers (1967) writes:

Those of us who are working in the field of human relationships and trying to understand the basic orderliness of that field are engaged in the most crucial enterprise in today's world (p.56).

Dryden & Mytton (1999) writing from the psychodynamic approach write:

Human beings are essentially social and their primary need is for relationship with others" (p.26).

Grenz (2001), a Christian theologian writes about the Christian relational view, which explains in my view the need to be in relationship and the healing power of being in healthy relationship. He writes of Christian anthropology as viewing the human person and human kind as a whole in 'relationship to God', whom Christians confess as the triune God. We are social beings who have a need to belong. This idea emphasises the social character of humanity in his ability to relate to God, the ultimate sense of belonging. Each person has relational properties that are implicit in our personhood and there by God's design. St. Augustine spent years searching for the final target of human longing and concluded in a prayer: "Thou [God] hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find their

rest in thee” (cited in Warner 1964)) leading him to conclude that the hunger we have for meaning and significance can be found in an intimate, personal relationship with God, and through God, with others.

Rogers (1967) believed relationships are the only context in which the need to love and be loved can be met. He went on to develop a theory of human potential, which placed the need for love (unconditional positive regard UPR) at the core of human experience and development. Wilkins (2000) in one of our designated readings writes of UPR as esteem and respect for one’s total being and notes it as an essential aspect of the Biblical concept of agape love; that of the unconditional love of God for humanity, the highest form of love, a transcendent love. In response to reading Rogers (1990) and his sense of unconditional positive regard I wrote:

Sep/Oct 2010 BP (Biblical Perspective) – to think about each person as God sees them – unique and precious and worthy of His love. Agape love - Huge theme in the NT – selfless love of one person for another without sexual implications. Love in this sense is a choice – one doesn’t have to like the person but we are commanded to love them. Love involves acceptance, esteem and respect. The attitude we hold towards ourselves affects how well we develop UPR towards others – a non-possessive love.

The Christian concept of unconditional love (in the sense of it not having to be earned) is termed agape, the Greek term for love, evidenced in the life and ultimate self-sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, paving the way for that ultimate relationship with God to be restored. Love is a key theme in the New Testament, where the focus is more on action than on feelings. Bergeron (2010) in his article on ‘agape and personal knowledge’ sums it up as: “a shared activity between persons that involves an ongoing encounter of their genuine selves” (p.7). He notes agape as the most perfect kind of love, characteristic of the perfect love of God, clearly expressed in the life of Jesus. The bible asserts that God is the embodiment of love (1 John 4:8). When I choose to love I am connecting with God. My love for God comes as a result of His love for me and is a personal choice. Genuine love is never forced.

When I meet with my clients I see them as relational beings, through being made in the image of God, worthy of honour, respect and unconditional love. The connection, which takes place in that therapeutic relationship or in any relationship, I am coming to understand to be spiritual. Rogers was influenced by Buber, a twentieth century Jewish philosopher who wrote about the I/Thou relationship and the dialogical existence of man, a relationship of mutuality

and reciprocity, relating to each other with a unity of being. Buber (1970) believed people were more than objects; they were subjects who meet and complete each other. Buber located God in relationships, thus affording them special significance. Buber believed that the relationship between individuals and their selves, between people, and people and creation was increasingly that of I/It. As a result it was becoming more and more difficult to encounter God. I remember feeling intense sadness during the course that people now had to pay to enter into a therapeutic relationship. I still do. Bartholomew & Goheen (2013) note that when an aspect of God's creation is suppressed it will spring back like a tightly coiled spring. Perhaps, as a result of the lack of belief or recognition of a divine or supernatural presence in society today, spirituality is now raising its head and presenting itself in many and varied forms. This brings me to my final exploration of the qualities, which I argue innately inhabit our personhood through being made in the 'image of God'. I wrote in my journal:

June 2016 Trying to clarify my research focus – I am arguing that we are all fundamentally the same. We 'connect' as human beings – how? Why? Is it our spirituality that allows that connection? Spirit connecting with spirit. Our capacity to empathise. Connection can take place in spite of very differing backgrounds, life experience and w/views – it transcends all of this – transcendental experience.

7.5. Spirituality

I wrote in my journal:

Week 2 diploma - My spirituality is predicated on my belief in God and on the existence of God. I am encouraged by Brian Thorne and his mention of spirituality and how he learned to integrate that into his work. This was a big issue for me last year/how can I integrate my faith into my counselling – it cannot be separate as it is the essence of who I am. I cannot detach it.

This is an area that has intrigued me from the onset of the course but has grown through the development of my research, requiring further engagement with literature to help me gain a clearer understanding. One of the challenges in integrating spirituality with psychotherapy noted in my literature review was the ambiguity over definition and meaning. I am always drawn to go back and try to find the original meaning and work from there. The Oxford dictionary notes spiritual as meaning: "relating to or affecting the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things", coming from the Latin word 'spiritus' meaning breath, referring to the breath of life or animating principle. The word 'spirituality' is not a Biblical term. The Greek word 'pneumatikos' meaning 'pertaining to the spirit' is the closest

related word, where 'pneuma' means breath. The Hebrew word for spirit in the Old Testament is 'ruach' denoting breath, wind or that which gives life. Elkins (1998), a clinical psychologist, writes of the soul as "the deep empathic resonance that vibrates within us" (p.41), that which makes us feel alive. Every culture engages with this aspect of humanity, this life force in their own unique way. Conversely the opposite of life is death and in the book of James in the Bible, James writes: "the body without the spirit is dead" (2:26), affirming the life giving qualities of the spirit. Provost (2009) writes the opposite of being spiritual is to have no energy, is to have lost all zest for living. Nouwen & Cashman (1981), theologians, note that depression is the end result of lives that are fragmented and disconnected from their spiritual core. They see both individual and social wholeness as brought about through a spiritual connection with God, the author of life. This takes me back again to the claim Jesus made re being "The way, The truth and The life". I love how spirituality connects with life. We are living beings.

As was noted in my literature review, there has been a reawakening of interest and focus on religion and spirituality resulting partly from an acknowledgement in the health profession of the positive effects on health and wellbeing. Gutsche (1994) writes of spirituality as perhaps the most unexamined issue of diversity within the field of mental health. This appears to be changing. Where and how though, does it fit in the world of counselling and psychotherapy or indeed in scientific inquiry? The importance of understanding the spiritual dimension in a client and in oneself is gaining ground and focus, in the recognition that spirituality is intrinsic to personhood, highlighting the need for a holistic approach both in training and in practice and in research. Polanyi believes scientific inquiry cannot operate on secular grounds alone, there needs to be a dedicated submission to a transcendent or spiritual reality – a faith or belief in the rational order of life, recognising pattern and orderly structure in nature and consequently in human nature.

7.5.1. Childhood Intuition

I was struck by what I now view as an element of spirituality in my experience of my very first counselling placement in a primary school in Edinburgh with Place2Be, a leading national children's mental health charity, which provides in-school counselling services. I was going to be assigned three children to work with (between 6 & 8 years old) and I was given the opportunity to meet the children in their classroom environment first, purely to observe. It was approaching Christmas and the first class I attended, the children were taking part in a bingo type game where they each held cards corresponding to themes associated with this time of year. At one point the teacher called out the name 'Jesus' and I will never forget the

look on the little boy's face who had that card in his possession. His face beamed with joy and as he picked the card up he placed it on his chest with pride. The second class I had the privilege to join, the children were practicing songs for the Christmas school assembly. I was encouraged to sing along too if I wanted to. My eye caught one little boy who was singing his heart out. After they finished singing he ran over to me with a huge smile on his face and said to me: "that was a Jesus song". I noted in my journal that both responses produced "*a real sense of joy*" both in the children and in myself. Shortly afterwards I was encouraged by my supervisor to watch a documentary called the 'Nurture Room'⁴, a film about 3 troubled schoolchildren from Glasgow, whose lives were transformed through the nurturing care of their teachers. The children were given a dedicated room to work in and when asked by the presenter of the documentary, what was special about their room, one child responded by saying "God made that room". I wrote in my journal:

It is almost as though God reveals Himself to children in a very real way - an innate sense of a God who loves them...

I am also reminded of a story I read some time later, which touched my heart and ties in with my experience above. The story of Alex Renton's (a journalist and writer) response to his young daughter wanting him to send a letter to God asking Him how He got created? Renton, an unbeliever, didn't know how to reply to his daughter's request, so decided he would ask Rowan Williams who was the Archbishop of the Church of England at the time. This was William's reply:

" Dear Lulu – nobody invented me - but lots of people discovered me and were quite surprised. They discovered me when they looked round at the world and thought it was really beautiful or really mysterious and wondered where it came from. They discovered me when they were very quiet on their own and felt a sort of peace and love they hadn't expected. Then they invented ideas about me - some of them sensible and some not so sensible. From time to time I sent them some hints – specially in the life of Jesus to help them get closer to what I'm really like..." (Alex Renton The times 2011)

As I have been further investigating this topic I have made links to some of what Elkins (1998) writes in his book, 'Beyond Religion'. He notes that authentic spirituality awakens the soul, something akin to stirring up the 'wonder' of life, reclaiming something we all seem to have naturally in childhood. He writes, "In childhood the soul has a natural beauty and sparkles with life" (p.4). I was very aware and loved this sense of awe and wonder in life and experience in my own children as they connected with the beauty and wonder of the world around them. Hay & Nye (2006) note that research has shown that spirituality is massively

⁴ (<http://thenurtureroom.com>)

present in the lives of children, rooted in a universal human awareness and not, he argues a culturally constructed illusion. There appears to be extensive research, which concurs with this way of thinking and argue that children have a predisposition to believe in a supreme being because they assume everything in the world was created with a purpose and order (Bloom 2007, Keleman 2004, Rottman & Keleman 2012, Petrovich 1997). This also ties with Polanyi and his belief that we have an innate sense of purpose and order within (1964). Is there a relation between religion and spirituality?

7.5.2. Religion and Spirituality

Historically religion and spirituality were synonymous with each other. The soul was a given in the understanding of persons where the soul was viewed as a vital, embodied, spiritual core of the personality (Benner 1998). Psychology was understood as the “science of the soul”. With the advent of secularisation, the matter of our souls became privatised and has been relegated as unnecessary baggage from the past. Hill & Pargament (2003) note a polarisation of these two constructs where increasingly people want to distance themselves from religion as a result of the historical, and sadly present brutalities committed in its name. Religion historically encompassed a metaphysical or supernatural reality. With the advent of postmodernism, where these realities are no longer recognised, a spiritual vacuum has been created. Religion today is mostly perceived as a separate entity from spirituality and seen as a fixed set of ideas or ideological commitments, an adherence to a code and set of rules. An example of this sentiment was brought home to bear in my own family.

My experience of this involves my daughter and her particular experience of religion in our home and church as she grew up. She has shared her story publicly. I walked through a very painful journey with Emma as she went through a personal identity crisis, which presented itself in the form of anorexia. She knew about God and the love of Jesus through being brought up in our home but it was during this dark period in her life, as the condition was taking increasing hold of her, that in a place of despair she cried out to God for help and recognised and experienced Jesus and His love for her personally for the first time. Her healing process began at that point and within a short period of time she was released from the strangle hold of anorexia and is presently flourishing in life. When giving her personal testimony at her baptism, 4 years ago, whilst relating the transformational healing in her life, I was shocked to hear her say that her sense of Christianity as she was growing up, was that it was all about “rules and regulations”. Interestingly she now relates her experience of transformation as a mind and heart integration of her Christian belief. She had a ‘head’ knowledge of Christian faith up to this point but it was only as she opened her heart to receive

it and experience the love of Christ personally that it all came together and began to make sense.

Rogers (1967) writes about a concept he terms the actualising tendency in the human organism with a tendency towards fulfillment, actualisation, a reality that operates at a deeper level, a universal drive to grow and perfect. He writes that the organism's innate tendency to actualise is the "mainspring of life". Although critical of religion in his early years, towards the end of his life he identified a new spiritual dimension in his work and wrote about the quality of 'presence' when making deep relational contact with his clients, a sense of spirit meeting spirit – an energetic meeting between two people. He writes:

I find that when I am closer to my inner, intuitive self, when I am somehow in touch with the unknown in me...then whatever I do seems to be full of healing. Then simply my presence is releasing and helpful... At these moments it seems that my inner spirit has reached out and touched the inner spirit of the other (1990 p.137).

For Rogers the purpose of life is to discover and actualise the true self, to become what we are meant to be by design. He writes, "our organisms as a whole have a wisdom and purposiveness which go well beyond our conscious thought" (1980 p.106). West (2000) notes a similar sense when he writes: "we are spiritual beings on a spiritual journey, inhabiting a spiritual universe" (p.4) He writes of experiencing his own sense of spirituality in York Minster cathedral associated with feelings of awe, which he believed connected him to his 'true centre', his spiritual self. Lines (2002) argues in 'Counselling within a new spiritual paradigm' that spirituality is inextricably linked to the idea of the transcendent. He writes of the spirit as being "the inexplicable bridge between the human and the divine" (p.104) but shies away from conferring any sense of essence. Lord (2010) argues in 'Cultivating Sacred space in Psychotherapy' that:

Psychotherapy is, ultimately, a spiritual pursuit. It is a pursuit of enlivenment, attunement, alignment, and resonance with the energies of an integrated and fully embodied life (p.270).

From a theological standpoint Richard Rohr (present day Franciscan friar) notes that the search for the soul has gained more clarity in our time as we find words that make sense to the modern, psychological mind. He refers to the soul as the 'true self', an absolute reference point that is both within you and beyond you at the same time. He writes of our soul as our deepest entity, our unique, inner blueprint installed by the manufacturer (God) and we are given a span of years to discover it, choose it and grow it (2012). He believes we are made for transcendence and endless horizons (2011). Fowler (1996) writes of the soul as:

The seat of emotion, intuition and receptivity to God as well as to others, deep within us (p.34)

It is the part of us, which brings meaning and coherence to our lives, where through our spirit “we participate in an ultimate environment” (p.21). He notes spirituality as an expression of faith where faith is a matter of ultimate concern. This ties with Polanyi and his central theme of intrinsic faith in ultimate order and patterning. From a Christian perspective faith rests on the reality of God Himself, the ultimate source of reality and meaning, “the author and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2).

There appears to be a theme, which links all these theorists. Spirituality, from both psychological and theological points of view, is considered a significant and essential aspect of our psyche, encompassing elements of purposefulness, ineffable experience and of the transcendent, life enhancing elements. This ties in with Stott and the link he makes in his original quote, to spirituality and worship; it draws us out of ourselves to connect with the divine, the sacred, the transcendent, the ‘other’. I note the language used such as ‘true self, ‘true centre’, ‘intuitive self’ as encompassing the notion of an intrinsic aspect of our being which taps into my (and Polanyi’s) sense of inherent personal qualities embedded within each of us. This ties in with my sense of personhood to be sacred, as connected to God and as such believing the counselling space to be a sacred space in which the therapeutic encounter is a spiritual one. I wrote in my journal towards the end of my diploma training, whilst reflecting on my sense of the term ‘sacred’:

My sense of the counselling space being a sacred one resulting from my belief in life and personhood to be sacred, a healing space that embodies the whole person – body, mind and soul. I seek to encourage life and light in that space, helping to connect with their true nature. The course has enabled me to connect with that true nature at a much more fundamental level, using that to inform my way of being and in my practice. I can identify with Rogers and his concept of developmental change as a ‘process of becoming’ – giving myself permission to be the person God created me to be- a growing process of change and transformation but based on a given – the truth of who God is and who I am in the light of who He is.

In summary I argue we are all spiritual beings innately, whether we believe ourselves to be religious or not. From a Christian perspective however, where the essence of personhood is sacred, religion and spirituality are interrelated. My sense is that true religion is a synthesis of dogma lived out in practice, where religion and spirituality go hand in hand. In the Bible, James, the half brother of Jesus, links true religion to action, the outward expression of our

inward worship. He writes “religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world” (James 1:27). The meaning of the ‘world’ in this context is referring to a worldview, which operates outside a belief in God, His order and purpose. When I consider Christian spirituality there needs to be a coming together of the dogma and practice from a heart of love for God and others. Schneiders (2016) notes Christian spirituality as a pattern of Christian living. Provost (2009) believes it involves taking the beliefs and values of Christianity and weaving them into the fabric of our lives, so that they animate, and fire up the breath and spirit innately there. She argues Christianity with its rich spiritual tradition can provide a valuable lens through which people can discover and articulate their spirituality. So as I now see it, spirituality is about being in touch with our inner true selves, the essence of our existence, the dynamic life force of our being. I have noted previously of a sense of ‘coming alive’ as a result of my learning and experience on the course and I now understand that as a deeper encounter with my inner ‘true self’, where openness to experience was allowing me a deeper sense of connection with God and with ‘other’ leaving me with a sense of awe and worship. An encounter with God can be understood in terms of transcendence but at the same time felt and communicated through the immanence of personal experience. For me the connection with God is of ultimate value. Mangalwadi (2012) writes:

“If there is no God, then man cannot be a spiritual entity. He cannot be a soul, an imaginative creative self that transcends nature” (p.73)

I have come to understand more fully how we encounter something of a transcendent nature every time we encounter genuine connection as people. Jesus spoke of offering His followers ‘abundant life’ (John 10:10) – life at its fullest potential, both in the here and now but also for eternity, the soul never dies.

“And the Lord God formed man (humanity) of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7).

It seems we have come full circle again. Polanyi (1967) in his theory of personal knowledge wanted to restore meaning in the lives of people and in science. He notes that humanity “need a purpose that bears on eternity. Truth does that; our ideals do it” (p.92). He argues we cannot resolve this need on secular grounds alone, religious faith will need to play a part and is hopeful for a vision for the future where “a meaningful world... could resound to religion” (p.92). Fowler (1987) argues we are genetically potentiated for faith, ultimately faith in God, the primal source of all being. Perhaps scientific faith as understood by Polanyi and human faith as understood by Fowler could add to the sense of a post secular rapprochement Bondi

noted in her paper referenced earlier (2013b). Where faith as accommodating a confident belief in transcendent reality is integrated as an aspect of intrinsic learning and inquiry whilst also accounting for and validating our innate qualities and values, not least that of our spirituality. Integration of faith in this fundamental sense would release the inherent tension that lies in the field of faith and psychotherapy. Perhaps there is an argument developing for the theory of societal and cultural conditioning to embrace a further reality – that of universal conditioning: encompassing inherent knowledge, intrinsic to all of humanity.

In this section I reflect on my engagement with the question of “Who am I?”, a question, which took root at the onset of my training. I draw together elements of our being which I believe to be innate tacit qualities (that of social, moral and spiritual), which we possess as humanity and link them to the concept of being made in the image of God as conceived by Stott. I also make links and parallels to counselling theories and practice and to Polanyi and his theory of knowledge. As I have connected with these aspects of my self and how they relate to counselling theory and practice I feel energised with a sense of feeling at one with my being, confirming and strengthening my deep sense of personal identity. I argue these are universal qualities, concluding with the idea that it is our spirituality, which ultimately allows for the connection we experience as persons in relation. This excites me as I reflect on how awe-inspiring it is to be human, with all the dynamic potential that brings, not only for myself but for my fellow other. As with Polanyi my sense of hope remains, for all. I wrote in my journal recently:

I see the world through His eyes and have joy in engaging with the world more profoundly with a very real hope not only for the present but ultimately for the future.

Chapter 8: Conclusion, Discussion and Findings

I began this research inquiry by saying I see life as a puzzle in which there are many parts making up the whole. My Christian faith up to this point has been pivotal in helping me to make sense of that puzzle. My experience and learning on the course has been instrumental in adding further pieces to that puzzle, bringing with it further clarity, fresh vision and perspective. My research project is fundamentally an epistemological inquiry engaging with the postmodern problem of foundations. It has taken the form of a paradigmatic case study where the focus is on my lived experience of integration of my Christian faith with psychotherapy, as I have sought to answer the question of “How can a believing Christian find authentic space on a secular course in counselling and psychotherapy?”

Research literature as noted in my literature review reveals a widespread interest and need for ‘more space’ in academia to be given to the interface of faith, religion, spirituality and psychotherapy. It acknowledges the challenges involved in this domain both in training and in practice as a result of secularisation. Research on more specific challenges in relation to integration of faith and psychotherapy however is limited. My research reveals the specific challenge I faced and how I personally overcame the challenge. My thesis will serve to acknowledge and give recognition to some of the challenges inherent in cohabiting a secular space as a believing Christian and show how integration was made possible. I immersed myself in a process of inquiry, investigating the theories taught in the light of my Christian faith, both intuitively observing and intentionally seeking areas of connection. A significant part of my process and discovery was in finding and engaging with Michael Polanyi and C.S. Lewis. Their theories of knowledge have given credibility to my lived experience of integration whilst enabling the basis of an integrative epistemological framework to emerge: helping to bridge the gap I encountered and as such enabling a sense of ‘authentic space’ to emerge and thus creating ‘more space’.

I believe my inquiry will be of interest and of benefit to a wide group of people. It will have particular interest to students and practitioners with Christian faith who struggle to maintain a congruent personal stance both in secular training and in practice. It will also be of benefit to the academic establishment in counselling and psychotherapy in gleaning insight into specific inherent challenges encountered by students with strong faith conviction. I hope my case study will benefit educators and course designers and serve to encourage implementation of a wider breadth of theoretical literature. This will help to acknowledge and accommodate a wider representation of epistemological theory and in doing so create more space for dialogue

and discussion. I believe it will also serve a wider interest to anyone, religious or otherwise who is able to identify with the problem of truth in this postmodern era and perhaps help remove the stigma felt in and around this subject.

I believe this to be a significant and original contribution to the field of knowledge in that it draws together Christian faith, psychotherapy and Polanyi's theory of personal knowledge, leading to the conception of a framework, which has the potential of further development in the area of integration of faith and psychotherapy. My case study shows integration is possible and both extends and adds to the existing dialogue in this field. The limitation of this study is that it is a study of one, but one, which I argue will have particular resonance with other Christian trainees and practitioners whose Christian belief is axiomatic and all those of non Christian faith who also struggle with questions of truth and the postmodern problem of foundations and the lack of a unifying model with respect to truth and knowledge. I argue my personal narrative has enabled 'more space' to emerge both personally and theoretically and will create an opening for further developmental work in this area. In the following discussion I will summarise the main themes that have emerged from my research process.

8.1. Discussion

8.1.1. A Growthful Learning Space

My journey of inquiry has taken place in a secular space in which the fundamental values embodied in the person-centred approach (of empathy, unconditional positive regard and congruence) were afforded to me as a person, allowing me the freedom to engage with all the differing aspects of the course, whilst at the same time leading me to investigate my fundamental belief system in the light of what I was learning. The space in this context felt energising, encouraging my sense of curiosity, questioning and reflection; a space, which was conducive to learning and inquiry.

In this same space I was brought face to face with my strong personal bias in the context of my Christian belief system. I had to challenge and question and investigate all I had previously held to be true, this leading to a transformational experience in which my investigation, questioning and reflecting and process of integration led to a strengthening and affirmation of my fundamental values and beliefs. I could not bracket off or disassociate from them. They are an integral and viable part of me. The lack of a theory of knowledge which accommodated Christian fundamental beliefs, created a void in that space, which created a problem. The 'space' allowed for an encounter with and engagement into the problem.

8.1.2. Epistemological Challenge

The start of any journey of discovery begins with a problem. As a believing Christian on a secular academic course I encountered a personal problem in relation to my faith. This problem was in and around the concept of truth, a central tenet of the Christian faith, where my perception and understanding of truth felt at odds with my experience of the relativist ideology, which underpins the social science discipline. As a believing Christian I cannot be a relativist. I need to be able to ground my sense of truth in both subjective and objective reality. This dichotomy created dissonance in my spirit and created a passion in me to investigate and seek out a solution to this problem in order to create a space both internally and externally, which felt congruent to my 'self'. The lack of space I experienced in this context has been the catalyst for my inquiry.

I have identified with Polanyi and integrated his belief in humanity as being a "society of explorers". I see myself as an 'explorer' in which my sense of curiosity is primordial and motivated by a passion to understand. My journey of inquiry has reignited and heightened my sense of curiosity and urge to know. The academic space has given me the freedom to explore and develop this sense of curiosity. Polanyi has helped me to engage with inquiry at a new level giving me a fresh understanding of the tacit components, which are involved in the process. I concur with Polanyi in understanding science as having intrinsic elements, which he argues supersede empirical explanation and evidence.

Acts of discovery begin with both an organic and intuitive process involving trust or belief. Faith and trust are interrelated and crucial aspects of tacit knowing. Polanyi advocated a fiduciary element in acts of knowing where faith is understood to be an inherent element of our being which expects to find order and patterning as we set out to explore and find meaning. My understanding of 'trust' both in terms of 'trusting the process' in counselling and psychotherapy as well as 'trust' in the context of my Christian faith has been enlightened and strengthened through my engagement with Polanyi. My urge to discover and my capacity to know stems from an inbuilt sense of seeking order both internally and externally – a tacit sense I rely on in any act of discovery. This desire for knowledge I have come to understand as a desire for connection with reality, where reality is linked ultimately to truth. I identify with Polanyi who notes this as a person's calling.

I have noted a perceived void or gap in the academic space I was part of. What was missing and where was the gap?

8.2. Findings

8.2.1. Bridging the Gap – Polanyi

I have come to understand research as both a personal and a collaborative process. I recognise my need for guides and frameworks. Academic research needs to be framed within a viable and valid framework. The lack of an epistemological framework for my inquiry, which accommodated Christian belief led me to seek out theorists and ideologies that were not given substantive focus as part of my training. My discovery of and engagement with Polanyi and his particular theory of knowledge has been key to my inquiry and arguably my major finding. He acknowledges and affirms two significant elements, which are integral to the social science discipline and qualitative research – that of the value of personhood and personal lived experience. Where he differs from contemporary postmodern visions however, is in the area of subjectivism. He argues subjective experience, although personal comes with personal responsibility in seeking true knowledge with universal intent. This tacit dimension in personhood he believes to be key in any act of discovery. My experience of connection as a student during my training and my focus on connection in my research process has served to highlight these aspects of our being resulting in a deeper understanding of what I consider inherent knowledge or tacit truths in Polanyi's language.

8.2.2. The Essential Spiritual Self

My exploration, reflection and development of one of the fundamental big questions of life posed to me as a student at the very beginning of my training, that of "Who am I?" has served to strengthen the core sense of my identity. My interest in and experience of connection from the onset has drawn me to the qualities we inhabit inherently as humanity, our shared realities. I explore 5 qualities, that of creative, rational, relational, moral and spiritual aspects of personhood, which link Christian faith to counselling and psychotherapy values, theory and practice. My Christian perspective relates these qualities as being connected to the Christian belief of being made in the image of God. I concluded this exploration with a discussion on spirituality leading me to the conclusion that it is this core aspect of our being that allows for relational connection. I concur with the findings in the literature review that this is an essential part of our personhood and therefore needs to be developed and assimilated into the counselling and psychotherapy training environment.

8.2.3. Personal Knowledge – Integration of Heart and Mind

Personal subjective experience plays an elemental part in knowing. Postmodernist philosophy has used the concept of subjectivity and human finiteness as a limiting factor in any process of discovery. Polanyi acknowledges the risk involved but argues a shared intuitive reality in

personhood, elements of which are integral and valid to knowing and discovery. These elements don't work in isolation. Polanyi affirms the need for an interpretive framework to ground one's thinking where our capacity to reason plays a significant part in the process of integration. My engagement with the philosophical aspect of the programme as I entered the masters course gave me the platform to investigate an epiphany moment which I have coined a 'heart and mind' integration experience. I arrived onto the certificate course with a 'heart' knowledge of God (encompassing elements of tacit knowing) and am leaving with both a heart and mind knowledge of God (encompassing reason). Connecting with Polanyi and Lewis and their theories of knowledge enabled me to make sense of my epiphany moment where my capacity to reason, on the basis of my Christian worldview (my interpretive framework) made sense of my heart experience. I had the sense of 'coming alive'. I now have a new understanding of the dual structure in acts of knowing or discovery where aspects of both subjective and objective knowledge play a significant part. You can't have one without the other. I also have come to the understanding that one can know 'truly' but not fully. There is always more to know.

8.2.4. Creating 'More Space' - Emerging Model

My heart and mind integration encompassed elements of both modernist and postmodernist philosophy, engaging my capacity to reason alongside my personal felt experience creating a middle ground between positivism and relativism. I, along with Polanyi and Lewis believe that in order to create a middle ground there is a need to recover rationality but renounce rationalism, a call to embrace subjectivity but renounce subjectivism. I have come to understand that as finite beings empirical certainty is not possible in any act of discovery but true discovery is still possible. This stance, which is grounded in Polanyi and Lewis and their progressive theories of knowledge has enabled authentic personal space to emerge and through the writing and analysis of my experience has led to the formation of the basis of a conceptual framework, which could serve to plug the gap noted in my literature review. I conclude this section with my sense of the basis of an emerging epistemological model, which incorporates both Christian and counselling and psychotherapy fundamental values drawing from Polanyi and his theory of personal knowledge.

1. Science lives by discovery where discovery cannot be explained by wholly formalisable explicit knowledge. Discovery involves implicit knowledge as in the tacit dimension, which is manifestly personal and recognised as both a valid and dominant principle in all knowing. Tacit knowledge encompasses intrinsic aspects of human nature, such as our rational, moral, sentient and aesthetic elements of experience.

2. Science is both rooted in faith and requiring of faith in acts of discovery. The researcher assumes discovery is possible and is guided by an urge (or intellectual passion) to make contact with reality. This is an intuitive response to an innate belief (conscious or unconscious) in the natural order and rhythms of life, essential qualities in science. Faith also implies an element of risk therefore there is always the possibility of error. This limitation however does not remove the possibility of finding true discovery.

3. Science and knowledge cannot operate outside the personal involvement of the scientist or researcher involved in the process. The personal participation of the knower involves action, intention and responsibility in seeking knowledge with universal intent. Personal subjective experience is extended to embody normative elements intrinsic to human nature, creating a new vision of science, where there is an inherent affinity and harmony between natural and social science. This opens up a space for a fresh sense of confidence in the ability to know as persons where knowledge can be more than mere personal interpretation. This also creates space and credibility for our most fundamental values, vital beliefs and essential qualities where personal knowledge can be recognised as both valid and genuine but never complete.

4. The logic behind tacit knowledge is based on Gestalt psychological theory, the concept of grasping disjointed parts and organising them into a coherent and meaningful whole. Tacit powers allow integration to take place and account for our capacity to make sense of our experience incorporating both heart and mind knowledge.

8.3. Recommendations

8.3.1. For Christian Trainees and Researchers

I recommend:

Engagement with Polanyi and his alternative epistemological theory, which would help to bridge the current gap in secular training.

To use Christian faith and belief as an enabler to seek out links and connections to the theories being taught and to use the academic space and learning environment to further commitment to inquiry and to engage with fundamental beliefs in the process.

Further research into this particular epistemological problem.

8.3.2. For Trainers and Course Designers

I recommend:

Some element of teaching on Polanyi alongside postmodern theorists. This would create a balance in theoretical and philosophical thought and perspective.

A wider breadth of literature offered which engages with and acknowledges Christian fundamental belief in order to support Christian trainees in ways that will acknowledge their belief system and encourage their self-development. This could be suggested as additional reading for those who are interested.

A more in depth teaching on the concept of spirituality as part of the training programme to help develop a more holistic approach to the discipline and to enable students prepare for dealing with this aspect of humanity in practice with clients.

8.3.3. For Practicing Counsellors

For those with Christian faith and for those with other religious faiths or no religious faith I encourage engagement with Polanyi and more current authors who are engaging with and integrating his theories, to help gain a deeper understanding in this critical area.

8.4. Indwelling Presence

I am going to end my thesis with a quote from MacIntyre and the words of the following reflective song, which I heard for the first time as I began the process of writing my story. It encompasses my sense of God being with me not only throughout my training but also in the story of my life. I have written about my sense of a missing voice as I went through my training, that of God's voice. My lived experience, leading to the writing of my story has enabled me to engage at a much deeper level with that voice and presence. The song expresses my sentiment at a fundamental level. The story of God and His truth is the story that indwells me. This is the part of me, which needs recognition, both personally and theoretically in this secular space.

The Storyteller – Morgan Harper Nichols (2017)⁵

On a Sunday evening I'm
Looking over all the years
And where I've been

⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xID_t--BrqE

Looking at old photographs
I'm remembering
You were right there
And you have been ever since

With every page that turns
I see your faithfulness

Oh the mountain where I climbed
The valley where I fell
You were there all along
That's the story I'll tell
You brought the pieces together
Made me this storyteller
Now I know it is well, it is well
That's the story I'll tell

There were some nights that felt like
They would last forever
But you kept me breathing
You were with me right then
And all that you have done for me
I could never hold it in
So here's to me telling this story
Over and over again
That's the story I'll tell.

I quoted MacIntyre (1984) in Chapter 3 who wrote:

I can only answer the question "What am I to do?" if I can answer the prior question of what story or stories do I find myself a part of. (p. 216)

This is the story I find myself a part of. A story of faith, belief and hope.

Appendix 1: Glossary

Christian faith – a rational response to the evidence of God’s revelation in nature, the Scriptures and in the person of His son Jesus Christ and in his life, death and resurrection (Strobel 2000).

Faith – an intentional and engaged trust in something or someone you believe with assurance to be true: a belief encompassing both subjective and objective elements.

Foundational truth – truth as embodied in the person of Jesus Christ, God’s self- revelation to humanity.

Intuition – a skill guided by an innate sensibility to coherence (Polanyi 1958).

Postmodern – a philosophy which opens a space for critical thinking but one which discourages, diminishes and ultimately negates any belief in transcendent and objective realities where all truth is relative to context, person and place.

Religion – an outward expression of inward worship: faith in action where dogma and practice are interrelated.

Secular – as in non-religious where religion is characterised as an obligation to a particular organisation or tradition of faith where faith encompasses the transcendent.

Spirituality – that which attests to the essential core of our beings as humans: a quest for the transcendent and ultimate meaning.

Tacit knowledge – the dominant principle in all knowing; our intuitive responses to life and experience, encompassing moral, aesthetic and rational aspects of personhood (Polanyi 1967).

Truth – that which bears witness to reality.

Appendix 2: Bibliography

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